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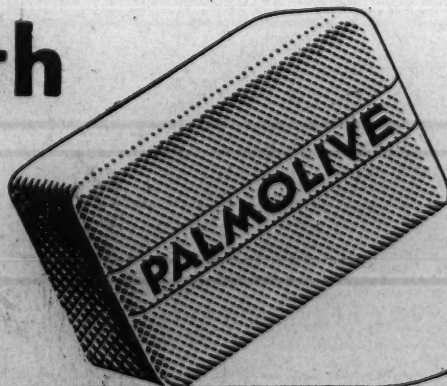
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SUMMER, 1946

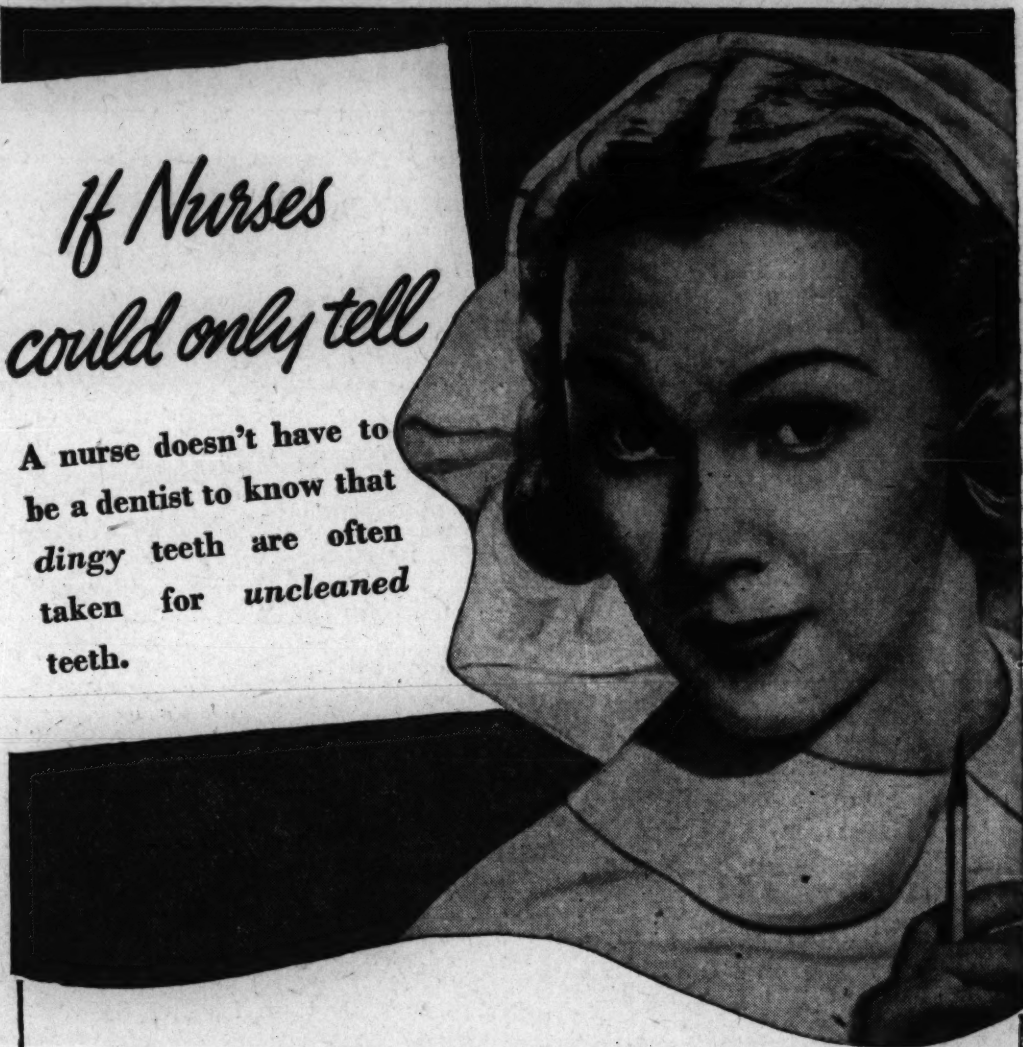
FILM QUARTERLY



Stewart Granger as Apollodorus and Vivien Leigh as Cleopatra in the Gabriel Pascal film, "Caesar and Cleopatra" by Bernard Shaw, with music by Georges Auric, decor by John Bryan, costumes by Oliver Messel.

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FILM QUARTERLY

Edited by PETER NOBLE

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FILM QUARTERLY is designed to function as a platform for discussion on all facets of cinema and filmic interpretation, with special reference to the work of directors, screen-writers, cinematographers and technicians.

THE EDITOR will be glad to consider contributions. All MSS and photographs should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, and sent to the editorial address above.



Dorothy McGuire as the dumb mute in Robert Siodmak's brilliant film, "The Spiral Staircase" (R.K.O. Radio). Siodmak has directed films in Germany, France and Hollywood, including "Phantom Lady," "Christmas Holiday" and "Suspect."

Some FILMS of the Quarter

reviewed by

PETER NORTHCOTE

IN dealing with the films so far shown in the West End since the turn of the year, I shall not include those like *Brief Encounter* and *Rake's Progress*, which were shown in that period just before Christmas to ensure their general release in the present year. Rather shall I content myself with discussing the many films seen in the ten weeks since Christmas, with a brief survey of the most important, even when the importance is not entirely justified by the result of the sum total.

Of course, everyone had been waiting to see the much-lauded *Cæsar and Cleopatra* for years past, and when it was shown at the Marble Arch Odeon it attracted more attention than had any other film in Europe since *The Great Dictator* was launched on a delighted war-time West End public in 1940. Is it a good film? Up to a point, yes. Is it a great film? No. It is certainly an adult film, and one that deserves encouragement. We must count our blessings, and although one agrees that it is regrettable to spend so much time, money and studio space on the making of one of Shaw's minor works when we might have had Shaw at his best for less than quarter the price (how about the expert David Lean giving us *Candida*, or the socially-conscious Launder and Gilliat adapting and directing *Widower's Houses*?), the fact remains that to have Shaw at all on the screen is something to shout about. Rank gave Pascal *carte blanche*, and Shaw's favourite film producer-director engaged composer Georges Auric, John Bryan and Oliver Messel, decor, Muir Matheson to conduct the London Symphony Orchestra, and almost every well-known actor in the country to play in it. The mere fact that so many of the well-known actors get little or no opportunity of showing how good they are, and others who are indifferent, anyway, prove how very bad they can be, doesn't alter the generosity of the gesture. Quite clearly, if *Cæsar and Cleo.* does not click at the box-office, then art in the movies is in for a pretty severe setback.

Despite the dark colouring (or because of it, perhaps) Miss Vivien Leigh looked more beautiful than ever before. Her portrayal of the girl-queen was a strangely uneven performance. Too much on the shrill side for most of the picture—rather like one of her Mrs. Dubedat scenes in *The Doctor's Dilemma*, I thought. But was ever a queen so beautiful, so appealingly fragile? If such a queen be found, then Republicanism will suffer its severest shock to date. To Mr. Rains go the chief honours. He is an actor of depth and restraint. Also he knows how to speak Shaw; with both conviction and understanding. What little comedy is produced in the film is owed to Rains. Who

else is there? Granger, Lovell, Walter, Percy, Thesiger, Sydney, Robson—but why continue? They are all in it somewhere, but one cannot remember what most of them do! For they appear to matter so little. They wander about in courtyards, palaces and along Roman Walls, but they make no imprint on the memory. What one does remember as a lasting impression (and I think it will, in justice, be remembered after the publicity push behind the film has been forgotten) is that *Cæsar*, like *Henry V*, is an experiment, a costly and and disappointing one, but an experiment nevertheless. From that angle it is worthy of the utmost consideration; especially from those socially-conscious folk who demand a more literary cinema, but are inclined only to take into account, when criticising this particular film, the debit side, which includes the deadly sins of pretension, monopoly, waste and Continental exhibitionism.

America has sent us some mixed selections in the past, but few film years can have commenced with such a varied conglomeration as we've had in the past two months. The silly *Whistle Stop*, with George Raft still drearily going through the customary fisticuffs, held the place for chief attraction for much too long at the London Pavilion, but this was followed by a gay little romp called *The Diary of a Chambermaid*. The critics sharpened their pencils, and those who only use fountain pens bought some vitriol to fill them with, but I enjoyed this little film made in Hollywood by French director Jean Renoir, who last year gave us that beautiful film, *The Southerner*. I thought it unique in that Paulette Goddard, Burgess Meredith, Hurd Hatfield and Francis Lederer all behaved, under the expert and sensitive direction of a master film director as one imagines Continental artistes from the Paris studios would have behaved under similar circumstances. If you don't care for this one, you will admit that it's unusual.

Three Strangers, with Geraldine Fitzgerald, Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet, was a fantastic and novelettish concoction about superstition, matrimony and British justice. As it is supposed to be about London one can only assume that neither scriptwriter nor director has ever visited these shores. As a tragedy it is hokum, and but for the fact that it wastes the gifts of three able artists, it would be very funny indeed.

Orson Welles returned to us, after too long an absence, in *To-morrow is Forever*. This movie, far better than its title would suggest, opens with America's entry in the 1914-18 war. Welles as an American soldier, leaves his wife, gets his face knocked in, has it grafted anew, is subsequently reported dead and twenty years later returns to his hometown in America with beard and German accent to complete his disguise. He finds his wife married again, and the baby son he left now a grown up young fellow who wants to get into the 1939-45 episode. Mother won't let him, of course, because she doesn't want to lose son as well as husband, and the film is mostly a conflict between husband and wife—the former with beard, cape and broad-brimmed hat to disguise himself; the latter a matron, comfortable, sweet and nursing her bitter memory. The plot may sound trite, but as handled by director, cast and scenarist, the film resolves itself as intelligent entertainment.



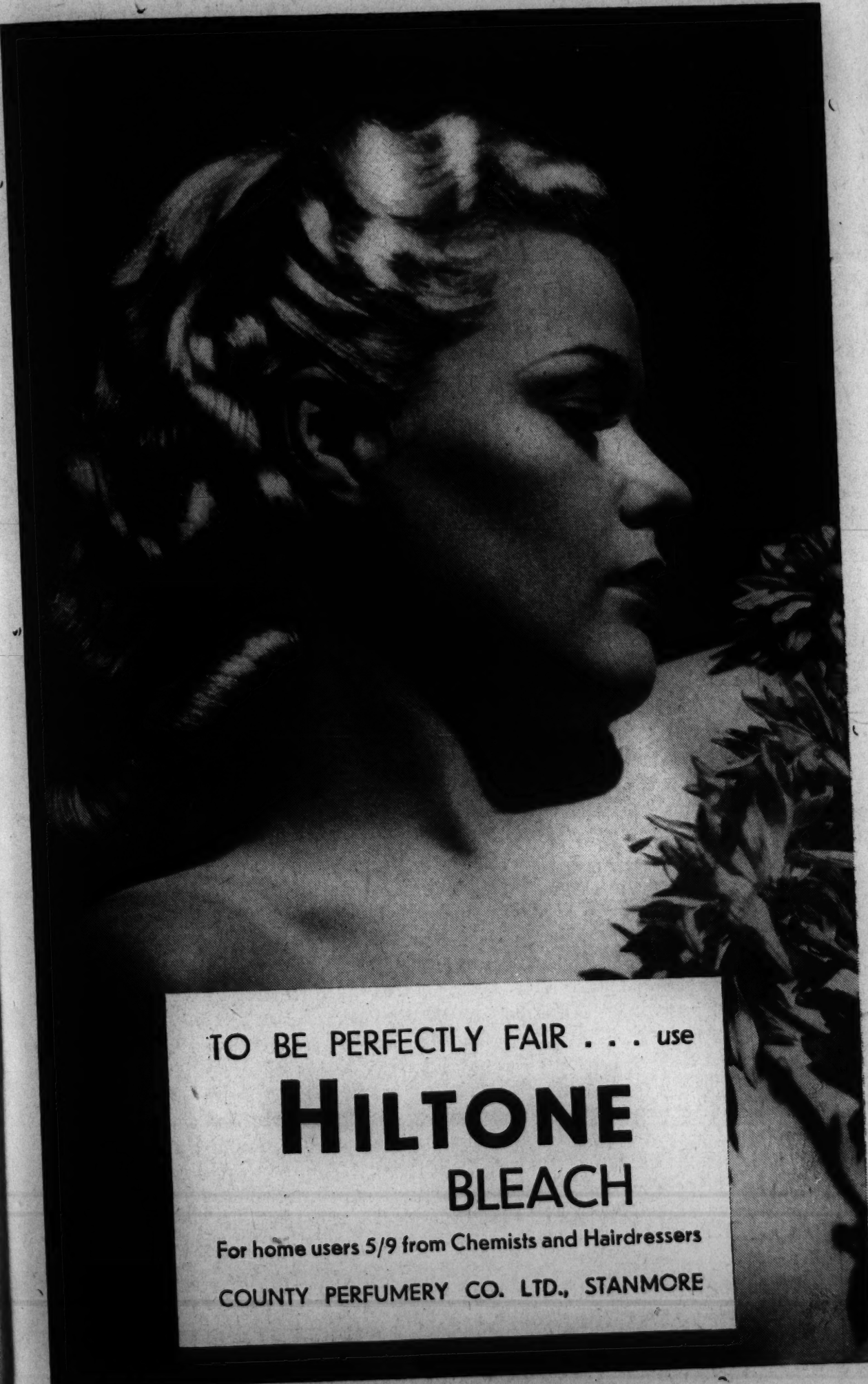
"Saratoga Trunk," directed for Warners by Sam Wood, from the novel by Edna Ferber, which is distinguished by a virtuoso performance by Ingrid Bergman.

The same cannot be said for three offerings from the Warner stable. Another "forever" picture is *Forever in Love*. A queer, hotch-potch of sentimentality containing the familiar ingredients—"lurve," religion, democracy, and the female curve. The "ordinary young man" of the plot is played by John Garfield, so you can be assured immediately that this is no "ordinary" young man. There's a celestial choir to accompany the bitter remorse experienced by all concerned after the American officers and men have discussed how wonderful it is that God makes the sun shine on the U.S.A. Before this happens some 11,000 feet of film has been used up, and then—the music swells, the fade-out ultimately arrives and we totter out as best we can. Garfield's opposite number is Eleanor Parker. Together they struggle hard to convince in a story that may be well-intentioned enough despite the overwhelming vulgarity evidenced by the producers in pandering to the lowest in basic mass psychology. Neither *Confidential Agent* nor *Saratoga Trunk* were much better. In the former there was some excellent camera work, an impersonation of a super gangster-moll by Miss Bacall (which was rather unnecessary in view of the fact that the character meant to be represented was a British society girl), and a couple of Greek and German actors playing two

Spanish fascists! Miss Bergman is the highspot of the latter film, a screen version of the well-known Edna Ferber novel. The beauty of Ingrid is no less than the beauty of Vivien. As a beautiful brunette, she will hold you spellbound. The film also is spellbound—after two hours it suddenly comes to life, but until then it is a motionless motion picture—a contradiction in terms. See this for Bergman's acting.

After Pascal's epic, the most publicised film so far seen in 1946 has been *The Last Chance*. It is a well meaning piece of work, dealing with the struggles of a group of folk drawn from almost every strata of society and most countries of the world. Because it is only the third Swiss talkie to be made it is as well that tribute be paid to its superb technical qualities. The shots of various refugees, military and political, crossing the Alps over to the Swiss Frontier are outstanding, and the theme, preaching the doctrine of internationalism, disarms serious criticism. The West End showing coincided with the sittings of U.N.O., and those who witnessed the tragedy outlined in the film were conscious that only a few miles away, at another large building, sat a body of men capable of stopping the appalling consequences of our neurotic civilisation as shown in *The Last Chance*. My only regrets here were due to the performances of the two Englishmen in the leading parts ("Good show," "Too bad," and "Hard lines" were the sort of expressions continually used) and as such schoolboy terms are usually left behind when one gets out into the world—certainly such a world as the men and women in this story encountered—it all somehow seemed a trifle false. I also considered the theological sequences, with that repetitive boosting of the film priest, smug and hard to bear. But on the whole *The Last Chance* should be supported as a work with many fine moments, and a magnificent idea serving as its basis. The director is Leopold Lindtberg.

More recently still, we have had an infusion of mystery, suspense and horror into the London cinema. Both *The Spiral Staircase* and *Scarlet Street* are superb examples of film art in their respective spheres. From the opening shots of *The Spiral Staircase*, when we hear the tinkling of a piano in a fit-up cinema of the early 1900's and see a tragedy being enacted in the hotel bedroom overhead more melodramatic than anything in the early "flicker" beneath, right down to the final fadeout with a fourth murder being committed before our eyes, the action never lets up for one moment. It is authentic "period" and true cinema, well interpreted by cast, director Robert Siodmak, and photographer. I have left *Scarlet Street* last on my list because I prefer to end upon a note of praise. Can I tell you not to miss it? Urge you, in fact, to miss it at your peril! See this film, which will rank with *Double Indemnity* as the best psychological thriller ever made. Fritz Lang has directed the same "team" as he had in *Woman in the Window*: Edward G. Robinson, Joan Bennett and Dan Duryea. Good though the first film was, this one is eminently superior. Vivid, taut, polished and adult, it is both sensitive and tragic. It is real. However sordid the subject, whenever a certain phase of living is put on the screen in the future, I hope it will be presented as shrewdly, wisely, and as fearlessly as the makers of *Scarlet Street* present it here.



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NOVEL INTO FILM

LOUIS GOLDING, *distinguished novelist, playwright and screenwriter, makes some pertinent comments on "Mr. Emmanuel"*

I HAVE been asked what emotion most possessed me during and after the conversion of my novel, *Mr. Emmanuel*, into a film. My paramount emotion is, in a strict sense, irrelevant to the novel itself, the film itself. It is an emotion after the event. As the making and the showing of the film recede further and further from me, as I turn my attention more and more to the excogitation and making of further novels which may or may not be made into further films, the thought that most perturbingly remains with me is the difference in the way in which *Mr. Emmanuel* was received in our own country, and the way in which it was received in America. About the making of the film itself, I hope I can speak with a certain dispassionateness, at all events within the limits imposed on me by the fact that, with Gordon Wellesley, I was responsible for the screenplay. I think I can say it was an honourable job of conversion, by any standards. There were a story, an idea, and certain three-dimensional characters in the book. The film, under Harold French's expert direction, did none of them any disservice. If Greta Gynt, as Elsie Silver, had not the almost psychopathic subtlety of that lady, she did full justice to her allure. Regarding Felix Aylmer in the name character, I am certain that no actor in England could have bettered his performance, and I am doubtful if anyone in America, excepting perhaps Paul Muni, could have done as well. But those opinions are not my concern in this place. The film in London did not set the Thames on fire. It had a pleasant, but by no means effervescent, press. The Amusing Ladies of the Sunday newspapers were scathing. But that is so much their *metier*, and they do it so delightfully, that who can reproach them for it, even if their wit tends to keep away from an honest-to-God movie, a number of people who might have derived from it an hour or two of unshameful entertainment? The film did nicely in the provinces (but not so nicely as *The Madonna of the Seven Moons* or *The Dolly Sisters*).

But let us now turn our attention to America. In America—I think I do not exaggerate it when I say—in America they went simply frantic about it. "*Mr. Emmanuel* not only spell-binds," announced

Walter Winchell, "but finds a home in your conscience." "I acclaim it with orchids," said he. "Out of the flaming world into your heart thunders the most daring picture ever filmed." "Emotional T.N.T.," said one columnist. The adult, the austere, *New York Times* proclaimed: "We confidently predict that this picture is one of the best we will see this year. Felix Aylmer's performance is one of the best we have ever seen." It was, as they said themselves, a "three months' wonder on Broadway."

Why, I asked myself, why all these orchids? (In London the most extravagant bouquet that could be gathered for us was a daisy chain with a dandelion here and there.) Was it the method of advertisement? Was it because they loudly declared that the central principle of Elsie Silver's spiritual make-up was "O.K. I'm no lady! So what?" But that can't possibly be the answer. After all, words more or less identical with those, are identical with the leit-motif of a large number of Hollywood films. The other leit-motif of course is, "O.K. I'm a lady! So what?" That gets us nowhere. Yet there is that three-months-wonder to explain. Is it because, in our country, the achievement of *Mr. Emmanuel*, so far as both the novel and the film are concerned, is comparatively humdrum? I mean this in the sense that the creation of character in the round is an accomplishment of our literature all the way back to Chaucer and all the way forward to Norman Collins. A good enough story—and it has been agreed that that is a fair description of the story of *Mr. Emmanuel*—a good enough story is no hindrance either. But no particular help. We are more or less used to good enough stories. In America, on the other hand, they have other achievements than character and story, excepting in a very specialised sense of story, to their credit. In tempo, in glitter, in brilliance, both in their prose-writing and in their film creation, they are, of course, without a peer. They are admirable in story, but only in that sort of story where the characters are two-dimensional, paste-board characters that fit into a design like the cut-out pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. (Please note. I am speaking in the airiest generalities). Further, was it not the very unfamiliarity to their eyes of the principal characters, Felix Aylmer, Greta Gynt, Walter Rilla, that made it far more possible for them to imagine that these were the actual histories of people being presented to them for the first time? If the film had presented in those same parts, let us say, Paul Muni, Marlene Dietrich, Paul Henreid, would they not merely have been conscious that here were two talented gentlemen and a lady whom they had seen in make-believe before and they were now seeing in make-believe still another time?

Well, this is a mystery I submit to you—if you are at all interested. There must be *something* to explain the puzzling disparity between the sweet little English daisy chain and the hot-houses of American orchids.

RANK

By

"CRITICUS"



SOMETIMES at Denham Studios, a burly dark-haired man may be seen striding through the corridors, followed by an *entourage* of secretaries, production managers, and press representatives. On other occasions he may be seen sitting quietly in a corner of one of the sound stages, watching scenes being shot of one or other of the films produced under his sponsorship. He is Joseph Arthur Rank, man of power in the British film industry.

It has been said that Rank possesses the quality of remaining an enigma, and to some extent this is true. Compare the authoritative, business-like movie magnate, as he sits in his enormous West End office, with the pleasant, tolerant, but nonetheless serious Rank who teaches each week end at Reigate Sunday School. It is well known that he is a deeply religious man ; in fact, Wardour Street wiseacres have not been slow to seize upon this fact in their efforts to belittle the Yorkshireman. But the quietly-spoken film magnate does not mind criticism.

His rise to fame and immense power in the film world has been rapid. Yet it was not his intention, at one time, to enter the commercial side of the industry, for his interests lay in another direction. The son of Joseph Rank, the flour-milling millionaire of Hull, the young man grew up with a deep religious fervour and a strong bond with the Methodist Church. All his life the boy had lived in an atmosphere of theological theory, and his adolescence and early manhood were coloured by the all-pervading and intense spirit of crusading.

The elder Rank left his son two legacies—millions and Methodism. In 1930, when Rank was forty-two (he was born in Hull on December 23rd, 1886), he founded the Religious Film Society, with the object of

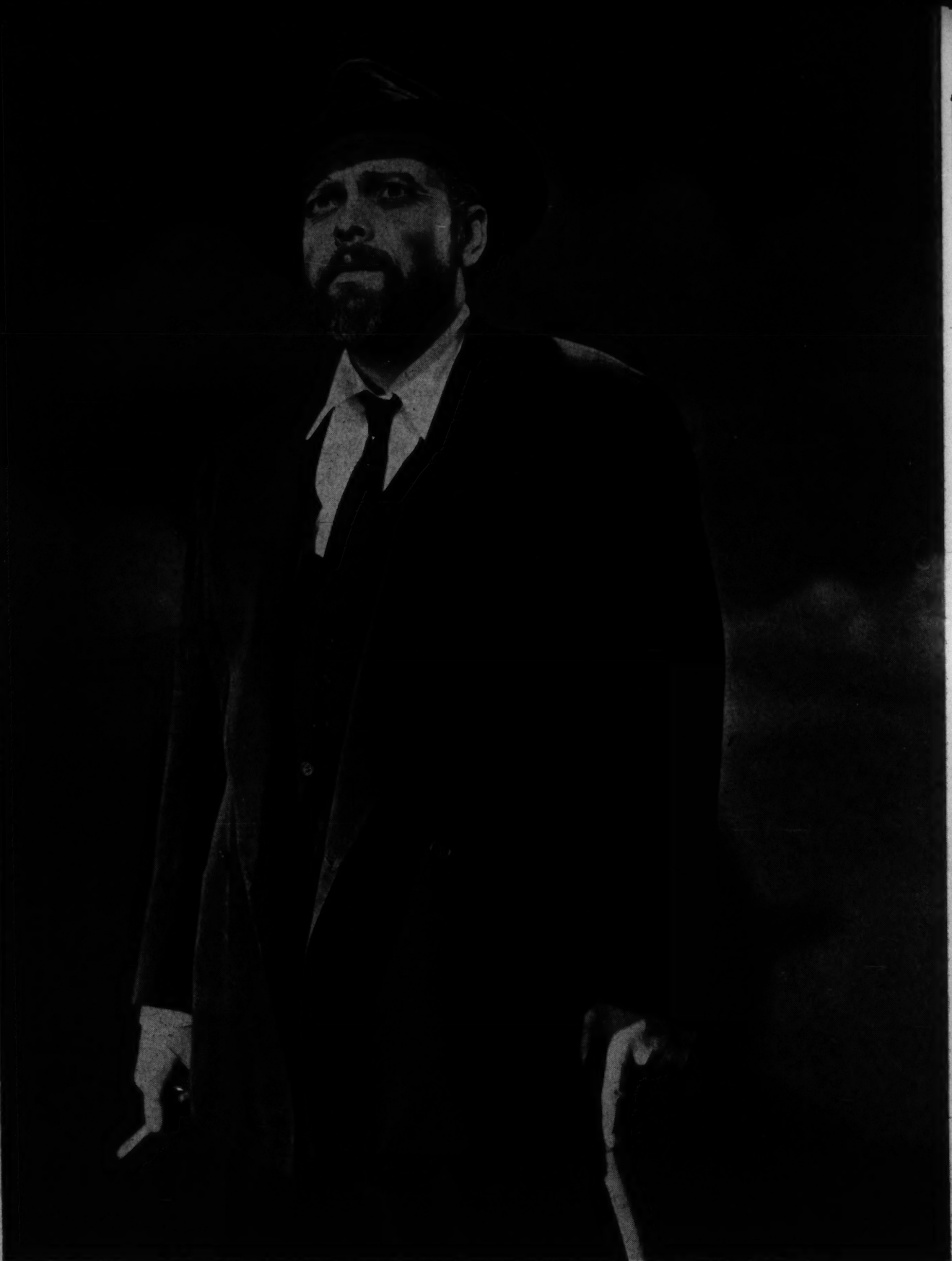
making movies with theological themes. His original idea was to install cinema projectors in churches, thus ensuring exhibition of his films to church audiences. But attendances showed no increase and Rank decided that if the people would not come, to take his films to the people. Thus he took the first step towards his present eminence. Ten years ago a modest British film earned the praise of the discerning critics. It was *The Turn of the Tide*, directed by Norman Walker, a story of a fishing family of Robin Hood's Bay. This excellent, but unpretentious film was one of the first attempts to portray authentic British life on the screen, and it will always have a place of honour in British film history. It was financed by Rank and Lady Yule, and was an augury of things to come, for whatever Rank's many critics may say, he has continued in his efforts to put the life and face of Britain into our films.

Almost imperceptibly during the next few years the flour magnate entered films in a big way, becoming a member of many boards of directors on both the production and exhibition sides of the industry, and, in 1941, on the death of Oscar Deutch, he came into the limelight by assuming the chairmanship of Odeon Theatres. Diffident, serious, quiet-spoken, he became at once a figure of immense significance. And, as later on his interests increased to such an extent that he controlled a great proportion of the producing units in British studios, the name Rank began to assume for some people a sinister aspect. The question of monopoly was raised by workers and artists inside the industry, while the handful of independent film producers apprehensively watched Rank's empire grow.

The Methodist has not been unduly worried by the question of monopoly. He will go on in his own way. He says blithely, "I believe that films can be a tremendous power for good ; furthermore I am determined to make films about the British way of life, as expressions of our culture and our desire for world peace. If anyone can do the job better than I can, I shall step down, for I have many other interests with which to concern myself."

His writers, producers and directors confess that they have been able to make for Rank the films they have long wanted to produce. They admit that there has been no interference, but each and everyone shares the same apprehension—that Rank might in some way subordinate the interests of the British film industry to Hollywood. For such is his determination to show our films in America, and so intricate are his connections with American distribution and production that it seems likely that the essential British quality of our film product may, in the future, be sacrificed for an abstruse, "international" brand of movie which will appeal to nobody, least of all to the Middle West audiences at whom it is presumably aimed.

Be that as it may. Many of our finest young directors and writers have been responsible for excellent Rank films, which succeed in being both good and British, both intelligent and entertaining, both nationalistic in flavour and therefore international in appeal. The Yorkshireman with a mission has indeed put British films on their feet. What of



Orson Welles, as he appears in "To-morrow is Forever," directed by Irving Pichel for International R.K.O. Welles is now appearing in a comedy with Harold Lloyd, directed by Preston Sturges, and also is directing and appearing in "The Stranger," for International.

his future? Even his many antagonists do not really question his sincerity. Many are inclined to believe him when he says, "Films should have an uplifting and civilising purpose. Of course they must be entertaining, but they should have a message. I want our films to be worthwhile, not empty, trashy and demoralising."

These are encouraging words from the man who rescued British films from the doldrums of the 'thirties. Joseph Arthur Rank, family-man, devoted father, Sunday School teacher and movie magnate is one of the men of destiny behind our screen entertainment. Only events in the next few years will prove him to be either a "sinister monster of monopoly" or a sincere benefactor with a moralising mission.

• • •

Ann Todd and James Mason in Compton Bennett's "The Seventh Veil," from a story by Sydney and Muriel Box, one of the outstanding British films of 1945. Mason is now appearing in Carol Reed's "Odd Man Out."



The Film and Society

THAT which distinguishes *La Bete Humaine* or *La Femme du Boulanger* from the English-speaking film is the attitude of the producer to his cinema-audience. Our film producers achieve a synthesis between lower and middle class taste, distract the eye from background and the mind from character study by a fast graphic technique which converts the film into a fairy tale. When it is a theme like the war, the violence remains, the reality disappears. The weakness of combining a plot crammed with incident with familiar background material was shown in *Mrs. Miniver*. To most, it just wasn't convincing, like so many Hollywood films of the war years.

One effect of the war, with its torturing stress upon reality, and its emphasis upon the need for undistorted values, is that it has made a revision of this crude situation imperative for the film-producing world. It has led to a slight break with Hollywood and partly accounts for the recent unsympathetic attitude of the critics to American films. Society occasionally becomes serious and then it challenges the film that leads it through a maze of power and sex symbols that distort its own values.

Russia, after the Revolution, was only too glad to face the challenge; and France . . . well, the French film, as far back as 1928, was intensely political and sensitive to its peasant community and the response of its towns to the artificial problems they create of sex and industry.

That Britain began to face its own problem was shown during the "blitz" with Charles Frend's *San Demetrio* and Noel Coward's *In Which We Serve*; Noel Coward emerging from the brittleness of his theatrical experience to take up films. *Brief Encounter* came even nearer to a solution. But it must be remembered that these films were produced for a middle class that friend Coward had studied away from the footlights. The film producer's relationship is not, however, primarily to a middle class audience like the theatre's. It is to a working class that has itself changed considerably from inferiority complex to self-confidence in the last six years.

The need for something different arising from this change is not satisfied by an increase in documentary films for any length of time. For the Russians, in the infancy of their film industry, the documentary, if many-sided, satisfied the emotions of an uncultured audience because they were bewildered by the social upheaval. The Russian failure is revealed in the return to fantasy and an aping of Hollywood formulæ. In films like *The Last Chance*, *In Which We Serve*, *Marie-Louise*, *Millions Like Us*, it seems that the war has provided for the democratic countries like England and Switzerland a sudden drive similar to that which arose from the Soviet Revolution.

The need would be better solved by the film that has a good story content but is no larger than life. If it were not that Mr. Rank's *Cæsar and Cleopatra* is intended as much for American as for English audiences and was begun some way back in the world's history, it might seem that a long time lag will occur between the old and the new. On the other hand enormous enterprise correcting this impression is revealed by the fact that Mr. Rank has been trying to persuade the British to like Russian films.

Experiments like this reveal the producer's increasing consciousness of his responsibility. The lavish films of Cecil de Mille had their political value during the pre-war years of unemployment and the dole—a vicious, superficial value. A better example of the pressure of social responsibility shows itself in the history of the serial film. It was a profitable and facile *genre* for the young film industry. Violence of action compensated for slow direction and poor photography. Gross distortion was avoided by the brevity of the reel. The rise and fall of Pearl White traces a reaction to the fading Edwardian ideal and the insidious discovery of what Hollywood thought was its salvation in sex-appeal. Hollywood was in fact seeking a way out at that period from pure fantasy. The film city became a settlement that withdrew from American life.

A British film unit cannot, fortunately, become such a settlement, and so become devitalised socially. The social survey it is now obliged to take must lead finally to a revolution at the other end—in the technique of the film; a technique to cope with the problems of a film in which plot is subsidiary to character because character is realised as the expression of social force and therefore dramatically interesting in itself. An example—in fiction—occurs in E. M. Forster's "A Passage To India"; a psychological study of character that is poignantly relevant to the social conditions of our empire. Intensely political in feeling, but indirectly so, having wider contacts than the middle classes, it is a complex example of society seen through the individual.

British film technique is seeking extensions in order to resolve the subtle difficulties of this kind of scenario. But there are still fields only tentatively explored. For example, the technique of understatement in French films; the convincing presentation of working class types by the choice of actors who avoid the deadening effect on their abilities of tinsel and glamour (Hollywood made a brilliant start once with Burgess Meredith in *Winterset* and *Of Mice and Men*, but unfortunately discontinued). A thorough examination into the theories of early Russian exponents of the social film and its audiences was made in France, the valuable results of which were not published in England. Closer co-operation between the film producer and the theatre world has begun (surprisingly enough, it has existed for some time in Hollywood). The French were able, *à propos* of realist treatment, to sacrifice speed of plot through a return to the surrealist technique of some of the old silent films (see *Le Roman d'un Tricheur*). They are also masters of the use of music for realist purposes. One has in mind the brilliant use of the barrel organ in the first episode of *Carnet de Bal*, which, approaching and becoming louder as the tension increases, fades away after breaking the unreal tension. It is the symbol of realism interrupting a moment of fantastic horror.

The producers who volubly concern themselves with whether or not a film should cost this small or that colossal sum of money are subconsciously avoiding the real issue. How will the producer finally solve his problems? The encouraging thing in British films is that in spite of the inevitable makeshifts, he seems to have made a beginning.

EDWIN ALSTON.

The Cinema in France

by ROY-ALEXANDER FOWLER

• Yesterday is Forever

NOT so very long ago I was sitting in the cinema and, as people snuffled all around, was listening to Mr. Welles saying, in a tailor-made accent . . . "We must forget the past, because the past, with all its good—and bad—is finished. We must work for to-morrow, because To-morrow (pause) Is Forever . . ." It seemed to me that in this International picture, which I feel is near the top of the Hollywood school, there is a perfect précis of the American film's ethic. A youthful nation with a not very inspiring history seeks solace (although they would not call it that) and encouragement in the future. For them, viewed honestly, the past contains little that is attractive.

In another part of the world, on the Continent, where for five or six years people suffered in a world bearing little resemblance to that which they had previously knew as reality, the opposite was purposed. Although devoutly believing in the future, the inspiration and hope of the French producers were in the past. It was manifestly impossible that, no matter how much they desired it, the French people could now pursue their lives in their former tradition and manner. The new times and happenings required a stringent reorientation from which was founded and is evolving a new school of European culture. The French cinema which, previously, had been known as the most colourful, stylish, realistically poetical national school of cinema in the world, was a momentous harbinger of the new movement. Its three most important war-time productions are in the vanguard. Three films in which present and future events were told in terms of the past.

Of prime importance is the *chef d'oeuvre* of the French cinema, Marcel Carné's *Les Enfants du Paradis*. Since we hope soon to publish a detailed appreciation of this magnificent film I shall confine myself here to a few remarks on its background. It is a story of life on the *Boulevard du Crime* in Paris, almost one hundred years ago. Here, called the Boulevard of Crime because of the melodramas and "bloody dénouements" in the theatres it housed, the beautiful story of the two kinds of Children of Paradise is played. There are those children of the Theatre's Paradise and those, in the audience, way up in "Paradise," or, as we say, the "Gods."

The superbly produced souvenir booklet on the film starts off: "Enter Ladies and Gentlemen, young and old . . . Enter lovers . . . Enter, also, the Serious Gentlemen. . . . Come and see, as they in the songs, the Children of Paradise live and die, love and suffer. We are going to tell of their destiny and your's at the same time. Of a clothes hawker, of beauty, of glory, of shady hotels, of behind the scenes and of Piérrot by moonlight: these are the stories

of all people and of all time. It is life, which neither begins nor ends ; it is love, death—yesterday as to-day . . .”

There is the whole argument, needing no further comments. “Yesterday as to-day. . . .”

Then, there is André Paulvé's production of Marcel Carné's *Les Visiteurs du Soir* which, equally poetic, is less realistic. Chronologically it should come first, since it was made in 1942, while Carné's second film started production in 1943. The year is 1485 : the Visitors Gilles and Dominique, are two consorts of the Devil who, disguised as minstrels, come to a lonely castle in a plain just as a wedding is to be celebrated. Unfeeling, indifferent, it is their lot to seduce, he the bride, Anne, she the groom, Renaud. They both succeed, but Gilles really falls in love with Anne and attempts to break his pact with the Devil. With the clap of a thunderbolt, the dazzle of lightning, the smell of sulphur and scorched wood, a third Visitor arrives at the postern and asks for hospitality : *le Diable est dans la place*. His attempt to restore Gilles' allegiance fails, as also does his attempt to seduce the pure and faithful Anne. At the end, raging, he turns the two lovers by the fountain into statues of stone but, even then, he is defeated. Although their bodies are of stone, their hearts beat for all eternity.

A fantasy ? Rather, an allegory. The Germans knew it was being made and gave it their sanction. (It is ridiculous to suggest, as constantly do our less responsible critics and papers, that films of this nature were made in secret. One cannot spend 40,000,000 francs, hire technicians and artistes, work in Paris studios, send units on location, build castles in the country and, above all, show the finished film “in secret.” No, the point is, Germans simply did not know what the French were “up to.”)

The third film I shall mention reverses the order of procedure of the other two. *L'Eternel Retour* (really *The Eternal Theme*, but shown here as *Love Eternal*) which, when it opened in London a couple of months ago, received the most ridiculous and unfair criticisms ever accorded any film, took the legend of Tristan and Iseult from Celtic mythology, setting it in a modern frame. Here the past was told in terms of the present—a present that, as in life, is both happy and tragic. Perhaps, instead of saying it is set in the “present,” we should say it is in “modern dress.” There is no hint of the epoch or place in the script or film—only the Isle, the Château, the Town are mentioned, save in dress, speech and such things as cars. Again, its essence is poetry which, shewing how successful is Cocteau's script, gives a far more profound study of the characters than would the use of “natural” dialogue, or the like.

It is not that the French *hid* in the past during these years, because they were unwilling to live in the present. On the contrary, it is because they wanted to say something about the present that they drew upon the past. One is left, after seeing their films of that era, with an *idea*—an idea that has been suggested by mental imagery, a subtle, subjective evoking of a dormant ideal or a never forgotten belief. Then as now, now as then, forever and ever.

This probably makes their films the most (if the dreaded word may be used) “significant” realised in many years. There is, however, a very real danger in reading into them a lot of erroneous psychology :

they should be viewed mainly as exercises in the film medium—exercises that are founding a whole new school of cinematography. They are enthralling pictures to see, marked by an artistry in writing, direction, camerawork, acting, that is nowhere equalled in the world. They are examples of what may be accomplished when minds and not machines set about making films. Of the 278 films made during the war years in France, only three have here been mentioned. These three are probably the most important and those in which the particular trend we discuss is most plainly indicated. There are a hundred others—*Goupi Mains-Rouges* (watch for that as *It Happened at the Inn*), *Sortilèges*, *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, *Les Anges du Péché* (both by a brilliant newcomer, Robert Bresson), *La Vie de Bohème* ("une sorte d'hymne à la jeunesse de tous les temps"), *Falbalas*, *Le Baron Fantôme*, to mention only a very few—which are outstanding pieces of work meriting the special attention our space cannot give. When they are shown, it is to be hoped that the revelations of six years' independent experimentation by the French studios will not prove to be too strange or subtle for English audiences. It is interesting to note that, wherever they have been exhibited on the Continent to those whose life has been much like that of the French, they have always been widely acclaimed and enjoyed by all. For our own sakes let us hope it will be the same here.



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Above—Marcel Carne's "Les Enfants du Paradis," soon to be shown in London.

Below—Jean Delannoy's "Love Eternal," from a story by Jean Cocteau, recently seen at the Curzon.



Two British Directors

I. CAROL REED

ONE of the outstanding film directors in Britain is brilliant Carol Reed, whose record of excellence in the past few years is an enviable one. The film which has been the principal cause of the high esteem in which he is held generally was that notable piece of imaginative realism, *The Way Ahead*, acclaimed not only the best picture of 1944, but also the best British picture of the war. Indeed, many critics affirm that it is one of the best pictures ever made in England. With a simple theme, that of the varying reactions to their situation of a group of Army recruits from all walks of life, the film was excellent, and leapt into vivid life under the imaginative treatment of ex-actor Reed.

This youthful director achieved with this film a high point after several years of first-rate work. And not only is he one of Britain's outstanding directors, but he is one of the most popular men in the studios; his quiet, authoritative manner being reputed to bring out the best in the actors who come under his direction. Certain it is that every role in a Reed film is distinguished by that careful attention to detail which has long been a Hollywood prerogative. No point escapes Reed; his casts are hand-picked down to the smallest small-part player. From *Bank Holiday* to *The Way Ahead* his films have been marked by a trail of success.

Reed, tall, good-looking, dressed always in that carelessly careful style which is supposedly characteristic of the English public school man, is now in his middle thirties. Educated at King's School, Canterbury, he decided to make the stage his career and, at the age of seventeen, commenced by "walking on" in a play starring that distinguished actress, Dame Sybil Thorndike. When he was twenty-one Reed joined novelist and playwright Edgar Wallace as stage manager, and before he was twenty-five was producing tours of Wallace's plays, afterwards becoming the novelist's personal representative at British Lion Film Studios, until Wallace's death.

Already the young man had decided to become a film director and, after serving his apprenticeship under Basil Dean as dialogue director and assistant director, he was given his first picture to direct, eleven years ago. In 1936 Reed brought Ricardo Cortez from Hollywood for his film, *Talk of the Devil*, from his own original story, and Carol amusingly describes how he conceived the idea for this film, which concerned a man with many voices. During his early days at Ealing, Reed, a humble assistant director, made a habit of imitating



Carol Reed, seen chatting to a Chelsea Pensioner during the making of his brilliant "*The Way Ahead*." Following "*Odd Man Out*" Reed will make "*Portrait In Black*" in Hollywood.

Basil Dean's voice on the telephone to obtain quick results when giving instructions to the property department. This subterfuge was highly successful, and remained undetected for so long that Reed wrote his film story around this idea, a picture, incidentally, which at that time drew attention to him as one of the most promising of our younger directors. His succeeding films, *Bank Holiday* and *The Stars Look Down*, both indicated the sympathy and understanding with which Reed tackled the lives and problems of the little people, the ordinary British citizen. That polished film, *The Young Mr. Pitts*, further consolidated his position among the *élite* of international film-making ; his name now ranks with those of Hitchcock, Clair, Ford and Capra.

Reed, easygoing and humorous, lives in Mayfair with his actress wife, Diana Wynyard, but spends most of his time at the studios or on location. He is inclined to deprecate the praise he has received from the Press, and insists that *The Way Ahead* was so well scripted (by Eric Ambler and Peter Ustinov), that his own work was comparatively easy. Nevertheless his record would indicate that there is a good deal more to it than this. Himself a writer and an actor, and possessing technical studio experience, he is able to co-relate the work of screenwriter, actor and technician, bringing to his directorial task both knowledge and authority. More than most British directors, Carol Reed stamps his personality upon his pictures.



Robert Donat as Pitt, and Phyllis Calvert in "The Young Mr. Pitt," directed by Reed for Twentieth-Century-Fox in 1941.

From 1942, when he joined the Army Kinematograph Unit, he has been engaged primarily in making Army training films. It was the success of his outstanding short film, *The New Lot*, concerning army recruits, which decided him to make a feature-length film with the same theme. Since the completion of *The Way Ahead*, Carol Reed has collaborated with Hollywood director Garson Kanin on *The True Glory*, the magnificent film of European operations from D-day to VE-day.

With his newest film, *Odd Man Out*, he completes ten years of directorial success. In film circles here it is said that he has the magic touch, that he cannot fail to make hits. But it is more than that. Carol Reed *has* a magic touch, but this is his rare psychological insight, which makes his film characters seem real, which puts the living and breathing figure of the ordinary man-in-the-street on our screens. Reed is a personality with enormous charm and sincerity, and his films succeed in being sincere. At all times he is interested in human nature—the vagaries of which is to him the most fascinating subject in the world. And it is because his films are supreme studies in human nature, true films of character, that they achieve a quality of greatness.

* * * *

2.

MICHAEL
POWELL

WITH the making of *A Canterbury Tale* in 1944, Michael Powell realised one of his ambitions—to make a film about his native Canterbury. The film was not only an excellent example of the new and more hopeful kind of home production the type of film which puts British life on the screen, but it marked an important step in the progress of Powell and his collaborator Emeric Pressburger. Their partnership dates back six years ago to *Contraband*, and has continued from the famous *49th Parallel* up to that more recent and excellent piece of screencraft, *A Matter of Life and Death*.

Of the two, Powell is the stronger personality—or so it seems to the observer; the directorial limelight falls strongly upon his slight, wiry figure, piercing eyes and animated expressive face. Powell is indeed a dominant personality and, for his job as film director, this has been an asset. Unlike Carol Reed, who also hails from Canterbury, Powell is forceful, temperamental, sometimes difficult to get on with. However, it is agreed that he is a superb director, and one who knows what he wants from the word “go”; thus, in spite of some stormy scenes, he manages to make up for his dubious capacity for riding rough-shod, by bringing out the best work in the actors who face his cameras. Rarely has one ever seen a bad performance in a Powell-Pressburger film, and for this most of the credit must certainly go to “Micky” himself.

He was born in 1905, educated at King’s School, Canterbury, and commenced work in a bank. But this did not appeal to him, and by the time he was twenty he had succeeded in landing a job with Rex Ingram, who was directing films in the South of France. In five years Powell had succeeded in passing with honours through every department in the film business. Successfully photographer, cutter, continuity, film editor, stills cameraman, actor, screen-writer, and assistant

director, he finally directed his first film, an unpretentious picture for Fox called *Two Crowded Hours*. He followed this with half-a-dozen minor movies, which brought him no particular acclaim, but which taught him a great deal. In 1937, however, he succeeded in bringing to the screen a story which he had nurtured for seven years. It was concerned with the everyday drama of fisher-folk in the Hebrides, and for a year Powell worked with his unit on the remote island of Foula, to make the film. Titled *The Edge of the World*, it still remains one of the best British pictures ever made. Powell himself tells the story behind its making in his book, *200,000 Feet on Foula*, published in 1938, a book which is as lively and interesting as are all his writings.

The Edge of the World established Powell as one of the best young directors in Europe, and, following a period with Sir Alexander Korda, in which he co-directed *The Thief of Bagdad*, and *The Lion has Wings*, he made his first film with Emeric Pressburger. This was *Contraband*, the film which marked the beginning of the most successful writer-director-producer partnership in films to-day. Together they have been responsible for, among others, *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, *I Know Where I'm Going*, and *A Matter of Life and Death*. Both are still young, both have been responsible for a great deal of brilliant work, and together they constitute two of the greatest assets to our industry. Pressburger is something of a "back-room boy," but Powell is widely known, both as director and personality. He is a mass of nervous vitality. He never walks—he strides—he doesn't read—he mentally tears the inside out of both book and author. He doesn't merely think—he sits in ponderous silence and, though myriads of ideas jostle each other in his active brain, he rejects them all but the one which sets fire to his imagination, and finally brings him to his feet with a grin of triumph.

For him all roads lead to work. His interests: books, plays, people, past-times, and places, all have some bearing on films. He is vigorous, purposeful, ruthless, and may truly be described as dynamic. In conversation one is immediately impressed with his knowledge, and watching him direct is like seeing a spring of energy unwind itself many times a day. He is an excellent chef, seldom patronises the studio restaurant, but cooks all his meals in his caravan which is parked in the studios. When he is not preparing meals he is dictating notes or planning the shooting for the rest of the day. And when he is not actually directing, his active brain is always several jumps ahead of his colleagues, mentally visualising the next fifty shots.

He is himself a great film fan, takes an intense interest in the work of other British and American directors, and considers that there are three film geniuses alive to-day—Griffith, Chaplin and Disney. Powell has remarked that "good film directors are personalities, with physical energy, a good eye, a painstaking craftsman's mind, and a flare for handling people." He might well be describing himself, for he has those qualifications—and many more.



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The Unseen Stars

by ROBERT LANTZ

CRITICS and audiences complain in increasing numbers about the quality of films in general, though they aren't always talking about the same pictures. "What is the matter with Hollywood?" they ask, and don't realise that nothing is the matter with Hollywood that is not also very much the matter with the rest of the world. While our stars are still the same good, bad or indifferent actors, and while films have become even more perfect technically, the unseen stars of the films have either deteriorated or vanished, with a few shining exceptions. I am referring to the screenwriters.

There is a world-wide shortage of good film stories, and good screenwriters. Fantastic prices are being paid for best-selling novels, simply because it is assumed that they contain stories which the public likes—and so often these stories lose their best quality in the necessary process of adaptation for the screen. The few good new plays which were written since 1939 and become successful in New York or London have fetched fabulous money, simply because the demand for screen material far exceeds the supply.

It has become fashionable to attack "B" pictures (and many others) as "rubbish." People forget that a high percentage of published fiction or produced plays is also rubbish. Hundreds of films every year need hundreds of good plots on which to build a fast-moving, action-packed picture; and there are only a few dozen first-rate novels or plays to choose from, both in America and Britain.

The major film companies have established story departments in Hollywood with branches in New York and London, and since the end of the war story coverage of the entire European Continent has been resumed. Every possible encouragement is given to young writers: the literary agents will advise them to the best of their ability, experienced readers judge their novels, plays or original stories, the Screenwriters' Association has started a special branch for Associate Members to enable people genuinely interested in a screenwriting career to make first contacts with those already established in the industry, Harraps, the British publishers, Thomas Y. Crowell, the American publishing house, and Columbia Pictures Corporation are jointly running a "United Services Book Contest," to stimulate the ambition of those men and women in the Armed Forces of the United Nations who want to write books, plays or films.

Professionals in any branch of industry have to learn their jobs properly, slowly, the hard way, and the film industry is no exception. Film companies receive floods of manuscripts written by ardent film fans, by amateurs both in the arts of writing and screenwriting. I, for one, have had many abusive letters from otherwise charming people who visit their local cinema regularly and who consider me an unutterable fool because I do not see the film potentialities of the stories which they have written. Aunt Agatha "thought it a scream," and Uncle Oscar "suggested it was sure box-office stuff if rightly cast, preferably with Rita Hayworth and Boris Karloff!"



ERWIN HILLIER, *Cinematographer* ;

ROGER LIVESEY, *Actor* ; and

MICHAEL POWELL, *Director*

on location for

ARCHER'S

"I KNOW WHERE I'M GOING"

1945

Obviously, it isn't as easy as that to write a good film story. It takes real talent, plus experience. It requires a certain knowledge of this comparatively new medium, a medium which, incidentally, is quite different from novel or playwriting. Above all, in the beginning there has to be an original idea, a dramatic conflict that can be stated and solved interestingly in 90 or 100 screen minutes. And this is not so easy as it sounds.

The writers are the unseen stars of the cinema. Actors can act themselves silly, and cuties can look as beautiful as they like—it needs a story created by a writer's imagination, and a character formed by an experienced author to sustain an audience's interest in the person portraying that character or telling that story. It is a truism to remark that an actor "has brought an author's character to life." It would be much nearer the truth to say that it is the author's creation, his range of characterisation, that keeps the actor alive!



The Lighter Side

by F. MAURICE SPEED

Brother—Hand me an Axe !

IN the course of my job as a film critic I spend quite a percentage of my time in the cinema, not only attending the many private press shows, but also going to public performances in order to catch a film I have previously missed, or to see a film again, or to look at a picture which has not had the doubtful honour of a private screening. That I have been doing now for ten years. And even before this I went a considerable amount to the cinema for pleasure. I have had, therefore, quite an experience of cinema audiences. And I have eventually come to the conclusion that of the many millions who "go to the pictures" each week, many go for *other* reasons than to see the film.

Now I've suffered a great deal at the hands of and through the vocal cords of these dreary people. They have completely ruined many films for me and have nearly spoilt many others. They have driven me out of my usual unruffled calm into a state of wild fury. Given an axe on such occasions I would have laid about me with a will.

Recently, for the sake of posterity, and more essentially for my own amusement, I made a list of the types that have earned my undying hatred in the cinema. I'm going to list them below—and for the sake of alliteration I call them Picture Palace Pests.

Pest No. 1 is "The Chatterer." He, or she bustles in, generally with a friend of the same mentality, sits down, and immediately starts to talk in a penetrating whisper. This conversation may or may not be relevant. You know the kind of thing I mean—"Oh, look, dear, we must have got in at the end of the picture—I'm sure this isn't the beginning. You know I really don't know why I came to see this film—I detest Clark Gable, don't you? He's such a coarse man. Now Greer Garson, I like her, but I wonder why she had to go to America—I don't think it was very patriotic do you? Oh, by the way, my dear, Simmonsons had some lovely fish this morning. Did you get any? Not many people in the queue either. Yes, I'm sure this is the end of the picture; I seem to have seen it before sometime. But, there, they are all alike these days. I really wanted to go to the Odeon this week, but John said he didn't think I'd like the picture; too sordid altogether. I don't like sordid pictures, do you dear? Oh, look, there's Mrs. Harris along there. That woman's always enjoying herself somewhere. I don't know when she gets her shopping and housework done. Mrs. Ames thinks there is something peculiar about her you know. A strange man stopped there the other night when her husband was away and I know it wasn't her brother!—yes—and look at that fur coat she's got; her husband could never afford to buy her that . . ."

And so it goes on, and on, interminably. Give me an axe at such moments and I wouldn't be responsible for my actions. This type chatters through everything; murder, music, and mirth. The endurance of their vocal chords is amazing. Long after you and I would have been reduced to a mere croak their high, penetrating whisper is as loudly metallic as ever. The only remedy in this case is to move one's seat, because the type is completely oblivious to anything short of physical violence. Turning round and staring at them does no good at all; "shushing" is no better. To hurl a rude remark at them merely makes things worse, because for the rest of the film instead of going on with their general conversation they confine themselves to repetitive remarks about the vulgarity of some people who pay for their seat in the cinema and think they've bought the whole place!

Second on my list of P.P.P.'s is The Awkward Seat Enterer. This type inevitably comes in at the most tense moment of the film. If the seat they are making for is in your row, beyond you, they make sure that as they pass they grind their heel savagely on your foot, replying to your shriek of agony with a very grudging apology. Equally certain is the fact that as they pass you they will sweep your coat, gloves, bag and what-you-will with them, so that you miss the next fifteen minutes of the film while you crawl about on the floor under the seats striking matches in a vain search for your missing property. And, of course, the girl in front of you thinks you touched her leg intentionally! The man next to you is convinced you've burnt his trousers! By the time you have settled back in your seat, hot and dirty, and the uproar has subsided slightly, the attendant flashes her torch on you, and you know that you've got to go through the whole dreary business again (Of course, if the Awkward Seat Enterer is passing along the row behind you it's not quite so bad, he merely

knocks your hat off—generally quite easy to find without matches and things—and deftly scoops your hair over your eyes). The remedy in the former case is to refuse to get up, merely shouting at the would-be Awkward Seat Enterer, "There's no room in this row." This means a long and tedious argument with the attendant, and a chorus of disapproving noises from your neighbours, but in the long run it is the lesser of two evils.

Third on my list is The Fidget. There are two distinct specimens of this type. One is the person who keeps changing his seat for a better one. They are not so bad. Far worse are the persons who sit down and at once start to do a kind of St. Vitus Dance, which, I'm sure, must take years to perfect. Their head goes from side to side at frequent intervals entirely blocking out your view of the screen, which means that you've got to do the same in the opposite direction. They huddle down in their seats ; then they jerk bolt upright. They manage to execute all sorts of apparently impossible movements. It is useless to try to keep pace with them and the only remedy in a full cinema is just to forget that you want to see the pictures—and take a nice long nap.

Then there is the Man With The Pipe. Of course, it's foul and horribly smelly. He sits next to you or in front of you or behind you and smokes with great enjoyment, puffing clouds of evil-smelling smoke in your face. You cough gently, but no result. You look round at him with a penetrating and meaningful glare, but still with no result. Then, just when you think you can stand it no longer, the pipe goes out and for a few seconds you are in heaven. But out comes a loathsome large pouch, the pipe is filled to the brim and the sordid business starts all over again. At this point it becomes impossible. You turn round and glare again ; you say, "Phew, what a fug !" in a loud voice, but the object of your attention takes no notice. The alternative in this case is to lean across, snatch the pipe out of the man's mouth, and tread on it, or throw it at the organist, happily banging away at his mighty Wurlitzer !

We haven't nearly exhausted the various Picture Palace Pests yet. For instance, there is the small boy or girl who stands up behind you and through the entire length of the performance breathes down your neck. When you look round you find, to your horror, the child has spots all over its face and for the rest of the evening you are trying to dodge the clammy gusts of air which you now feel quite certain are loaded with the most virulent type of measles germ. Worse still is the child who eats chocolate beside you and cleans its hands carefully every now and again on your suit or overcoat. Such a child, you'll find, manages to have muddy boots on the driest day, getting rid of that mud on your trousers during the course of the performance. Another irritating thing about having a child next to you is that at least half a dozen times you have to stand up while they scramble over you in order "To leave the Room." But I guess there's nothing one can do about that.

There's The Lovers, too. Dame Nature again ! With heads close together, and hands clasped desperately, they didn't come to see the picture and they don't care a damn if anyone else did. They whisper

sweet nothings to one another and your attention is divided between the screen and trying to hear what they are saying.

Lastly there are the Amateur Film Critics. They are completely sure of themselves and their own judgment, and they repeatedly tell their neighbours all the silly things they consider exist in the film; they discuss performances at some length and recall the director's previous work.

And so one could go on—yes and on—almost indefinitely. But I won't. I'll merely remark that I'm grateful for the comparatively recent removal of at least *one* pest. I wonder if you recall the days when tea was served during the matinees? The noise, then, of chinking crockery, stirring spoons and uninhibited drinking was guaranteed to drown anything but the loudest "all talking, all singing, all dancing epic."

After all this one is perhaps left wondering whether anyone but pests visit the cinema at all. Of course they do. The great majority of people who go to the movies are nice, quiet, well-behaved people. Like me, for instance. I never cause any trouble at all. I sit as still and as quiet as a mouse. That is, with my Alsatian dog on my lap—and he never barks unless somebody upsets him or he sees Lauren Bacall.

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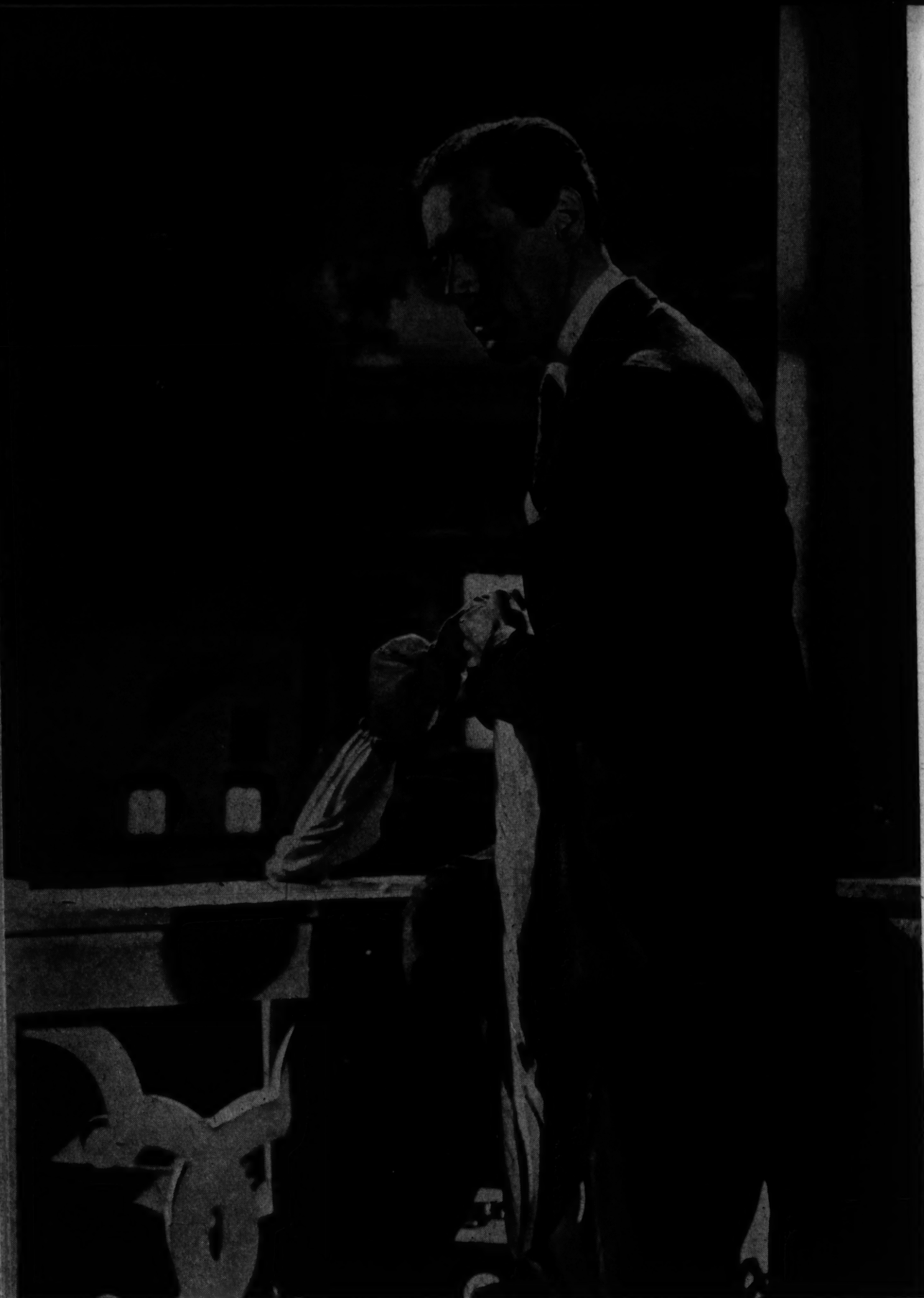
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REX HARRISON as Vivian Kenway in *Lauder* and Gilliat's "The Rake's Progress," directed by Sydney Gilliat. Harrison is now in Hollywood, where other recent British "immigrants" include Richard Greene, David Niven, Lilli Palmer, Herbert Lom, Peggy Cummins, Patricia Medina, Philip Friend, Pat Kirkwood, Jean Gillie and Roland Culver. Can we stop the exodus?

Screen *versus* Stage

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
ACTING IN FILMS AND IN
THE THEATRE . . . discussed
By FRANK SHELLEY

THE entertainment public may be said to be divided roughly into two kinds of people, both of them rather charming. First, of course, the regular once-or-twice-a-week cinemagoer. He, or she, has heard vaguely of the theatre. It is a place where embryo film stars serve their apprenticeship. Good actors don't stop there very long. Unless they are brilliant cranks, like Ralph Richardson and Laurence Olivier who seem to get a kick out of appearing in some old-fashioned highbrow pieces, largely inaudible, and totally incomprehensible from the three-and-sixes. But exciting and interesting people really belong to celluloid.

The second type looks down his or her nose at films, and feels slightly guilty if it enjoys them. It comes round to your dressing-room and congratulates you on choosing Art instead of Mammon (as if the thought had ever entered your head!). It insists on how much it prefers real live human beings to animated photographs. It cannot understand how people can act in the cold vacuum of a film-studio, with no audience responding to them, crowded in by twenty or thirty or more bored technicians, laboriously going over and over the same shot and the same few inane lines of dialogue. It is all so mechanical, soul-destroying, artificial, etc. . . .

It is, perhaps, possible, without going to either of these popular extremes, to adjudicate between stage and screen acting? Which factors have they in common, and which at variance?

Most critics will agree that some degree of "personality" is desirable in both cases. The trouble is that "personality" can be affected, or assumed, on the stage in a way which it cannot be on the screen. The camera is far more critical than the human eye. The brilliant young man of say twenty-three who, with the aid of Messrs. Nathan and Max Factor, is able to persuade us that he is King Lear for two or three hours in the theatre is faced with a much more formidable task on the screen. The odds are that he will only remind us faintly of an imitation of Lionel Barrymore. In other words, acting which is "sincere" on the stage will very often become insincere if automatically transferred to the screen. The stage requires largeness, exaggeration, overstatement (technically). The screen demands understatement, and a minimisation of facial expression (the eyebrows need move say only a twentieth of an inch for the camera, whereas for the back of the gallery they must move half an inch; and a good actor in each medium will instinctively select the correct measurement.)

And if the camera is more perceptive than the eye, the microphone is certainly more sensitive than the naked ear. It enlarges all affections, or mannerisms, and compels actors ultimately toward a simplicity or "naturalness" which, on the stage, would become insufferably dull and tame. In fact, fifty per cent. of the best screen acting would be inaudible beyond the first ten rows of the stalls in a theatre. Because

the cardinal virtue of screen-acting is simplicity, whereas the cardinal virtue of stage-acting is attack.

But the most important distinction between the two mediums is this :—the stage is intrinsically static, whilst the screen is intrinsically dynamic. So that in the first an actor is most significant and stands out more from his background *when he is moving* ; in the second he stands out more *when he is still*. This rule, of course, has its antithesis. That is to say, there are occasional moments on the stage when nothing could be more impressive than complete stillness, and similarly there are moments, climaxes, on the screen when a maximum of movement is required in the actor. But these are peak moments, in which a contrast to the general rule is desired. If actors on the stage are still for long they eventually merge into the scenery, and if actors on the screen are continually in motion the audience merges into lunacy.

Let us look a little closer at acting. It has two main aspects :—the inward, or conceptual (the “characterisation” if you like), and the outward, or technical, aspect. Amateurs tend, on the whole, to neglect the latter, and however good their inward characterisation may be, they usually fail to do themselves justice because they lack “performance.” Conversely, many professionals tend to rely too much on their technical expertness, and produce varying degrees of what is called “ham” acting, acting in which performance exceeds conception, or characterisation.

Screen and stage acting are on pretty much the same ground so far as the inward aspect is concerned. They require the same imaginative process—the process by which an actor either becomes the character or makes the character become him. But they differ considerably, as we have already noticed, as regards “performance.” Whereas the stage actor has more scope *outwardly* (he can “act” as much as he likes, provided that he has the inner conception to back it up), the screen actor has more scope *inwardly*. His subtlest emotions and thoughts (or lack of them) will register with terrifying accuracy. So that if the stage actor is free to “act,” the screen actor is free to “be” —as much as he likes. He need not be aware of his audience at all.

The stage actor, on the other hand, must always be instinctively aware of his audience, however much he conceals it. One may even say that, in the finest stage-acting, there is a magnetic co-operation between artist and audience—a kind of communion. This is most apparent in comedy, where we see an actor neatly timing his laughs, but it holds good in the case of tragedy too. This subtle co-operation is denied to the film actor, and it is the chief respect (some of us are tempted to think the only one) in which the screen is an inferior medium.

There is, perhaps, one other worth mentioning. A play achieves unity (if at all) in performance. A film has to have its unity edited for it. A film is much more at the mercy of a director than a play is at the mercy of a producer. The general tempo and emotional rhythm of a play differs (sometimes a lot, sometimes only a little) at every show, but in a film climax and anti-climax, diminuendo and crescendo, presto and andante have all been premeditated. The film is largely the director's medium. Screen acting is less its own master. But is that altogether a bad thing?

The Return of the Great

By PETER COTES

LAUGHTER is on the way again! Thousands of film enthusiasts can rejoice, for news has just reached London that the great Chaplin has started work on his film of the life of the French murderer, Landru, after a period of research lasting over two years. *Monsieur Bluebeard*, as the film will be called, introduces a Charlie we have never before seen; frock coat will replace

the shabbily genteel suitings of the past, a walking stick the expressive cane, and, of course, a beard for the immortal growth that has been the great comedian's best known trademark. Rumour has it that the adornment on the upper lip now has tragic as well as happy associations (Can Charlie be thinking of Hitler?). But whichever way you look at it, whether from the viewpoint of sociologist, criminologist, or just film fan, the news is good indeed.

For so much has happened since the screen's best-known figure made his last film. The "villains" of that particular piece are dead, and the "hero" is wandering around the globe, together with millions more of his co-religionists, hungry, desperate and homeless. The heroine of the story has in real life divorced our hero, and is now a star in her own right (though she has never been good since). So much has happened since we saw the little fellow who has done more to gladden this sick and weary world than any other man alive. The victim of a vile political campaign instigated by the biggest Isolationist and most powerful neo-fascist sets in the U.S.A., was the same figure whom the "Tommies" in the first world war sang about as they marched into battle:

*Oh, the moon shines bright on Charlie Chaplin
His baggy trousers are needing mending*

(was how it went, I think) and no artist—before or since—has equalled his status in world affection. Griffith, Bunny, Arbuckle, Fairbanks Senr., Mary Pickford, Garbo, Lubitsch, and heaps more besides have all had their run, either as actors, directors and producers, but none of them has been able to stage a come-back after a prolonged absence from the screen. And when they have made pictures after an interval of, say, four or five years (remember Mary Pickford in *Kiki* and Garbo in *Ninotchka*) the results were lamentable. But with Charles Spencer Chaplin it is different. Between *The Circus* and *City Lights* there was a lapse of three or four years, and they whispered that as Charlie had not spoken in his new picture (which was released along



with talkies during the first great "talk-at-any-price" boom) he was courting failure. On the contrary. *City Lights* "cleaned up." In London it broke records. It ran for months, its title was on everybody's lips, and it surpassed the receipts of the most successful talkie of the year on its general release! In America it was the same.

And *Modern Times*, Chaplin's next epic, made five years later, and in the midst of talking films (to such an extent that a "silent" was considered a museum-piece, a rarity, something to be avoided in the ordinary way, unless one was an antique collector), broke the previous record of *City Lights*. It seems that Chaplin's name grows greater as the years roll by. Despite the unfortunate litigation, and the mud-slinging by the Americans, the fame of the little man is as great, if not greater, than ever, and his *Great Dictator*, played at three West End Houses simultaneously when pre-released. Unprecedented? I think so.

For Charlie Chaplin, "come fair wind or foul," is not just an actor, a producer, director, writer and composer (as though these were not enough!). He is an institution. An institution like English beer, American chewing gum, the festive season, or the fatted calf. And the return to the screen of one whom Emil Ludwig once described as the "greatest figure since Christ," is an event to be celebrated with great pomp and ceremony. The years intervening since the showing *The Great Dictator*, have in many respects been the most momentous in Chaplin's whole career, for the vicious, the mealy-mouthed, the bigots and the reactionaries have tried to "get him." According to Will Rogers, Junr., a prominent Hollywood writer, the unfortunate case in which the comedian found himself arraigned upon a criminal charge, was a complete political "frame-up." This theory is supported by the following facts:—(a) The almost defunct and discredited Mann Act being called into play against Chaplin. It had previously been referred to as the last refuge of blackmailers and crooks. (b) The speech made by Chaplin a few months before proceedings were started against him. It was in Madison Square Gardens, before an audience of some 50,000 spectators, and it begged the Allies to open a Second Front on Russia's behalf when that country had her back to the wall. And (c) the long-standing feud between the comedian and Wall Street, the many uncomplimentary things said by Chaplin against both Hearst and Lindberg and the fact that he adamantly refused to change his nationality after so many years of retaining a British passport.

These facts, together with his eminence as a person, his riches as a film star, and his notoriety as the husband of three girl wives, made the comedian an easy target for his enemies to snipe at and, if the chance arose, to mortally damage. The opportunity presented itself when a Miss Joan Barry appeared on the scene. And Chaplin was tactless; so much is admitted. But it is a tragedy that we have made the private life of this great man and magnificent artist our affair.

The British public, whatever else its faults, is not fickle. Despite the ballyhoo and the unpalatable facts blazoned by the gutter press, they will remember *their* Charlie. "Charlie—God Bless Him"; that magic name whose golden creation suggests happiness to the hearts of men. For his Tramp-Clown-Philosopher, is a veritable prince

among men ; gentle, kindly and modest. The bankers, politicians and captains of industry have always hated Chaplin's unique position, not only in the cinema but in the world of international affairs. For he was different from the other stars and the various "personalities" the screen had propped up. Chaplin was not only the supreme film actor of all time, but, worse to his enemies, he stood up in his last three films and told the world about the hungry, the miserable, the dispossessed. He invited the enmity of the over-nourished, the privileged and the few. But if he has his enemies, he still has his friends. Already the "man in the street" is eagerly anticipating his hero's return. Some still remember those lines at the close of *The Great Dictator*, lines particularly significant to-day. Chaplin ran the risk of sacrificing his great international reputation as a favourite actor and comedian by making the most urgent and important political speech ever heard on the screen. Let those of us who forget that speech—though I fancy that few of those who heard it will be likely to do so—remember his plea for unity, to-day. *"I should like to help everyone, if that were possible. Jew and Gentile—Black and White. We should all want to help one another. We should want to live by each other's happiness, not by each other's misery."* Recollect these sentiments when receiving the news of Chaplin's forthcoming film.

As the late Alexander Woollcott wrote in *While Rome Burns* :
"We shall not see his like again."

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says GORDON WELLESLEY

SINCE September, 1939, British films have scored some notable successes, despite every material disadvantage, against the toughest competition any British industry has had to face.

The achievement of a high standard of production quality and polish has been coupled with (though not entirely due to) higher budgets and lengthened shooting-time. Because of this, it is becoming more and more assumed, and in the broad sense it may be true, that high costs, heavy expenditure in man-hours and materials are essential not only to gain entry to world markets, but to maintain our own.

But to assume that a picture must cost x hundred thousand pounds to win success is to ignore the record of many, and some recent, modestly budgetted productions. Polish we must have, but this alone has never yet been the deciding factor of success or failure. It is not to depreciate the fine work of technicians to suggest that in all the wide collaboration needed to make a film, only three things bear decisively on the verdict of the public: the quality of stars, direction, writing. But stars are made (and sometimes killed) by their material. Directors live by it. And the material, the subject matter, is all in that accumulation of imaginative thought, design and construction which is the script.

That document, embodying the choice of theme, the story and its treatment, is the plan by which the producer also stands or falls. It is the basis of his past achievements and the object of his most dire anxiety concerning those to come. He knows that a wrong decision here may do more harm than an error made in any other branch of picture-making. It is like a flaw in an architect's design.

Yet stories and scripts are the most uncertain factors in this industry. You cannot order them in bulk like solid materials. You cannot contract even for one with absolute assurance as to the result. Nor, having become possessed of script or story, can you depend on its enduring timeliness. Events may overtake you; the public mood may change. You cannot safely lock it up in storage; yet you may be compelled to do precisely that. Do you wonder that producers sometimes wear a worried look?

It has been estimated that five hundred feature films per year are needed to fill the routine screen requirements of a community, and in the English language studios more than that are made. Stories are culled from everywhere. Those taken ready-made from literature or the stage have still to be translated for the screen medium. More and more originals are being used. Whatever the source, this industry depends on *ideas* (by no means the monopoly of writers), on good screenwriting craftsmanship, and, as its power and stature grow, on good *screen authorship*.

Now authorship combined with technical experience is extremely hard to come by. Authorship develops inwardly. Technique must be

learned. But it is hard to learn it except inside a studio, and harder still to get inside a studio to learn it. It is a vicious circle. The surprising thing is that anyone has ever managed to break in. Authors of established reputation have found it easier to do so, though with a less compelling urge to stay. It is a haphazard business, too haphazard for the welfare of this industry.

Commonsense suggests that something should be done to ensure the inflow of new blood ; new writers who think and feel in terms of film, writers from other mediums who respond to its exciting possibilities. This cannot be done solely by cash sums paid to ranking screenwriters and for successful literary properties and "names." Young writers must have the chance to handle the tools of the craft, and the satisfaction of successful authorship should not be limited entirely to the endorsement of cheques. By its methods in the past, the industry has done little to enhance the reputation of the writer as such. The theatre and literature offer infinitely more in prestige and individual responsibility. These things are dear to writing folk, and until the industry shows a greater understanding of this fact, it will fail to capture the enduring interest of many first-class minds.

Such an understanding will be nourished by the success of some fine writers who have become their own producers, accepting responsibilities and risks, but thereby securing full scope for their individuality as writers and returns both in reputation and hard cash fairly linked to the results.

Not all writers are fitted for the producer's highly exacting job, but there seems no valid reason why the same principle of reward, with an attendant risk, should not be made available to all willing to accept it. There are reasons why it cannot be applied as simply as, for instance, in the case of dramatists, but a method can be found. I commend it as a fruitful topic for discussion.

The Screenwriters Association has always used its influence to maintain individuality in writing by discouraging a multiplicity of writers on a script and on credit titles. It is making efforts to give aspiring writers come initial contact with the industry. One group of producing companies, already distinguished by the brilliance of its writing talent, is working on a scheme for the systematic training *within* the industry of young writers of promise. It is to be hoped that some such course will be adopted by other producing interests as a long-term policy destined to be of immense importance for the future. Only so long as the creative side of British films keep pace with or ahead of their great technical advances may the promise of the last few years be fulfilled. Only thus can a strong and thriving industry hold its place at home and fittingly present the British way of life on the world's screens.

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PROFILE OF PORTMAN

SOME years ago a party of film people, headed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, left England for Canada, to make a large-scale propaganda film. As the boat left the dock two actors were leaning over the rails looking back at the shore. One of them, dark and handsome, with an unusual, interesting face, turned to his companion and remarked, "Well, we are off on a big job. I wonder if it—and we—will be successful?" The actor was Eric Portman; the project was *49th Parallel*; the film and the brilliant performance of Eric Portman as the Nazi-submarine commander Hirth were later to become by-words of cinematic 1941. Looking back now, Portman admits that making the film had been for him the result of an important decision. Previously he had made films, but none of them had brought him the measure of success which had been his on the stage. He confesses in fact that before *49th Parallel* he had decided to give up films and concentrate on the theatre.

Born in Bradford, Yorkshire, on July 13th, 1903, he made his first appearance on the stage in 1924 with Henry Baynton's Shakespearean Company, and it has been in Shakespearean productions that Portman has made some of his greatest successes. One remembers particularly his Horatio, Bassanio, Dauphin, Claudio and Romeo at the Old Vic., while many will recall his work in such plays as *The Master Builders* and *The Intruders*, and more recently in *Uncle Harry* and *Zero Hour*.

Filmgoers have remarked upon the poetry which is ever apparent in Portman's acting (They have been quick to notice the Byronic qualities which made his Lord Byron in the play *Bitter Harvest*, one of the most praised stage performances of 1936). His first appearance on the screen was as the curly-haired gypsy hero in a Tod Slaughter melodrama, but none of the subsequent films in which he appeared gave him an opportunity to set the cinematic world on fire. Thus, when Michael Powell offered him the role of Hirth in his new film, Eric made the decision which was to affect his whole career. "I had to decide on it," he said, "and leave for Canada in a matter of hours. I had other important stage offers which I was on the point of accepting, for I realised that if I did appear in this film it would take me to Canada away from the London Theatre for a dangerously long time. The theatre has a remarkably short memory."



ERIC PORTMAN

with the late Leslie Howard
in Powell and Pressburger's
magnificent film

"49th PARALLEL" 1941

When *49th Parallel* was shown in England the most remarkable thing about the film was that Portman, who played the villain, "the hated Nazi-swine," with intelligence, restraint and power, completely stole the film from the rest of the distinguished cast. By what strange psychological phenomenon Portman's sadistic portrayal earned the plaudits of thousands of cinemagoers in this country and America one can only hazard a guess. Perhaps it was a reaction against the stereotyped Nazis which had up to then appeared with Teutonic inevitability on the wartime screen, or perhaps it was the particularly English feeling of sympathy for the underdog (for, if you remember, the Nazi was chased through Canada, finally being captured after the rest of his crew had been killed).

Whatever may be the reasons for his overwhelming popularity it is undeniable that he became one of Britain's greatest screen discoveries of the war. He has since held his position in public favour in a number of films, principal among them being *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*, *Uncensored*, *Squadron-Leader X*, and *A Canterbury Tale*. It is safe to say that Portman occupies a unique position in the British film world with his combination of polish and power which has been up to now, the prerogative of such stars as Muni, Robinson and Tracy. It is this power, combined with his completely devastating charm, which makes his work inimitable. Portman is first and foremost an actor. He loves acting, he has acted all his life and, as he says, "I will go on acting for as long as the public wants me." Each part is a new adventure for him and he undertakes each role only after careful deliberation and a great deal of thought and research. He lives in Chelsea, but spends most of his off-screen time at his farm in Cornwall, for he loves the open air. He is a cheerful person, always jovial, amusing and exceedingly generous. One hesitates before ascribing to Eric the normal kind of generosity, for he is kindly to a degree not often found among people of prominence. I remember with pleasure the occasion, at a dance held by some film studio workers, when he was approached by the M.C. for his autograph to raffle for the Studio Workers' Benevolent Fund. Portman assented at once. "But wouldn't it be better for your Benevolent Fund if you had my autograph on a *cheque*?" he asked with a smile, and thereupon wrote out a cheque for a sum which made the M.C. gasp.

If warm-heartedness, sincerity and a genuine and an absorbing interest in his work count for anything, then he is lucky, for he has all three. Portman's lack of "star-complex," genuine friendliness and co-operation with his fellow actors and studio workers (who adore him, call him "Eric" and say that he is the most unaffected of all our stars) are prominent features of his attitude to his work. He is talented and likeable, surely an agreeable combination? His performances in the forthcoming *Men of Two Worlds*, *Wanted for Murder* and *Daybreak* will consolidate his well-earned position among the principal actors of the British screen.

LEO BRUCE.

Stormy Petrel of British Films

By JOHN K. NEWNHAM

MICHAEL BALCON needs no introduction to anyone who takes the slightest interest in British films. He has been one of our most dominant personalities for a period of over twenty years. To-day, in his late forties, he still maintains his position as one of our foremost figures, a bulwark of the British industry ; and, if anything, his activities have taken a more important and interesting aspect in recent years.

A lot of praiseworthy things may be said of Michael Balcon, both as a film producer and as a man, but his greatest quality is his aggressive independence. There are few major independent film producers left in Britain. Balcon is the most prominent of them all.

He has turned the relatively small Ealing Studios into one of the most widely-acclaimed production units over here, and although he has had to give way to the combines so far as the distribution of his films is concerned, Balcon is still completely unfettered in the production field.

For a commercial producer, he is astonishingly allergic to conventional screen-fare. Almost every film of his has something out of the ordinary about it. His experiments may not always be one hundred per cent. successful, but they are always interesting and stimulating. Balcon has always had faith in the intelligence of filmgoers, and filmgoers have usually repaid that trust.

This has been evident since the time he made his first feature film, *Woman to Woman*. One looks back and remembers *Journey's End*, *Michael and Mary*, *Man of Aran*, *Lady Jane Grey*, and *The Ware Case*.

This out-of-the-rut trend has been stronger than ever in recent years with *The Next of Kin*, *They Came to a City*, *Painted Boats*, *Dead of Night*, *San Demetrio*, *London*, *Johnny Frenchman*, and his most recent, *The Captive Heart*.

Balcon was the first to exploit in a big way the marriage between the documentary and the fiction film, which led to a new realism in British film production. He brought the Crown unit's ace documentary producer Cavalcanti into the commercial studios ; followed this by signing up another documentary king-pin in Harry Watt. He is the father of the "documentary feature."

At the same time, he has given opportunities to a whole host of young directors—Charles Frend, Basil Dearden, Robert Hamer, Charles Crichton, and others.

When the British zone was established in Germany, Balcon promptly sent a unit there to make a picture with a prisoner-of-war background, *The Captive Heart*. Simultaneously, anticipating the enormous post-war interest in our Dominions, he had Harry Watt in Australia making an all-Australian subject, *The Overlanders*.

All this has been done on a diet of worry and excitement, confidence and despair, dyspepsia and business acumen.

The conversation in the studio canteen recently turned to a current American film which was attracting attention because of the ultra-sexiness of its subject. The mere mention of the picture unleashed an atomic tirade from Balcon. He had been sitting there quite placidly a moment before. Now he was as vehement as an orator who had been working himself up to a frenzied climax.

"A disgusting picture!" he spluttered. "It ought never to have been made. It's a disgrace."

He said a lot more besides, but in that brief outburst he displayed the whole of his character. Anyone who had never met him before, seeing him for those few moments, could have summed him up rapidly and accurately.

He is volcanic, outspoken and wholesome-minded. Quick-tempered but not bad-tempered. Apt perhaps to jump to hasty conclusions, but generally, shrewdly right. A family man who believes (and practises what he preaches) that suggestiveness should be kept off the screens.

The stormy petrel of British films, Balcon cannot resist the temptation to plunge into any controversy affecting the industry. He is always in a fight of some sort, whether it be over a statement of some sort with which he disagrees, a question of policy, or matters likely to affect the industry as a whole. He will wage an inexorable campaign to assert his rights and beliefs.

No business is more mercurial than the film business, so it is not at all surprising that the screen world should be peopled with flamboyant personalities.

Michael Balcon is probably one of the most mercurial of them all; yet of all the producers in the British film industry his career has been one of the least mercurial.

Producers have come and gone, flamboyant sensationalists who have had spectacular results but in the long run have done more harm than good to the industry. But there has always been a nucleus of producers who have kept steadily on throughout the vicissitudes of the British industry and who, by their sheer soundness, have enabled our films to survive and reach the position they have achieved to-day.

The British film industry probably owes more to Michael Balcon than to any other producer, not because of any particular film or films, but because of the general level of his product over a period of more than a score of years and for the manner in which he has fought for the very existence of the industry.

His reputation as a producer has never suffered from ups and downs, and there are few other producers, either here on in Hollywood, of whom that can be said.

His career is typical of the man. He scarcely ever refers to his pre-film days. Films have dominated his life since 1920, when he began making advertising films in his native Birmingham in partnership with another young man who was destined to make his mark, Victor Saville.

They worked on a shoe-string. They had no money of their own. They would get their orders first and then borrow some money on account. And they carried on in this manner for a couple of years, when they ventured to London and plunged into feature production.

Forming Gainsborough Films, they made *Woman to Woman*. It was an outstanding success, but the money they gained was lost when they followed this up with failures.

Balcon is nothing if not optimistic. The set-back spurred him on. He and Saville launched on even more ambitious plans. Famous-Players-Lasky had built the Islington Studios and were willing to sell. Balcon made an offer which was nothing like the figure the studios had cost, but (to his intense surprise) the offer was accepted. Balcon said he would pay by instalments, and set about the task of raising enough money to produce pictures and pay for the studios. "In doing this," he says, "we must have achieved an all-time record for deferred payments!"

The debts were met. Gainsborough established itself on a sound footing, and flourished vigorously until, in 1932, it became incorporated with Guamont-British, with Michael Balcon in charge of production.

Then Hollywood came to Britain. M.G.M. started up at Denham, and Balcon joined them, making *A. Yank at Oxford*, with Robert Taylor. That was Balcon's only association with Hollywood, the only time he had deviated from being one hundred per cent. British. And he was not happy. The urge for independence was strong, eventually he forsook the mammoth Metro lion for the smaller, compact Ealing Studios.

It was in 1938 that he turned to Ealing. In 1939 the war came along and Balcon took part in the biggest battle of his career for the very existence of the industry. He fought any suggestion of Governmental interference or control and at the same time flung all his energies into helping the war effort. The studio made innumerable propaganda pictures. Feature production, under his direction, took on a new line in realism.

The studios were bombed, production was beset with difficulties. But Balcon, always happiest when things are at their blackest and a tough job confronts him, set the pace which helped British films to turn the corner.

"Films have given me insomnia, ruined my digestion, probably shortened my life by anything from ten to twenty years," he once said, with a combined touch of truth and exaggeration. But he would not be happy for a moment if he were out of harness. And remembering Ealing's excellent wartime record, may we hope it will be a long time before Balcon forsakes production of his excellently individualistic films, of the kind which will always have an honoured place in British film history.

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FILM OF THE QUARTER

Joan Bennett and Dan Duryea in the powerful, sordid, fascinating "SCARLET STREET," directed for Universal by Fritz Lang. We shall not see a better film of its kind this year.

★ THIS MAN PASCAL

THE impresario behind Britain's most controversial film of recent years is a short, stocky, volatile Hungarian. Gabriel Pascal has the monopoly of Shaw on the screen, and hitherto he has been successful, for both *Pygmalion* and *Major Barbara* were worthy examples of screencraft. But the costly and lengthy film of *Cæsar and Cleopatra* has evoked the criticism of certain sections of the more well-informed press, and brought into the limelight once more a man who in the past few years has had perhaps more publicity than any other figure in British films.

What sort of man is this Pascal? Where does he come from? How did he persuade G.B.S. to give him the exclusive film production rights of his plays? These questions have been posed many times before, and answered in varying ways. But Pascal is still something of an enigma. Above all the controversy, above all the abuse and the adulation, serenely stands the squat figure of "Gabby" Pascal who, like Cochran and Korda, possesses the true impresario's capacity of choosing only the best brains and talent to work in his productions. He is untroubled by the mixed reception accorded his latest film, and is already hard at work on the preparation of his next, probably *Saint Joan*.

He was born at Arad, Transylvania, fifty-two years ago, and was at one time a lieutenant in the Hungarian Hussars. Then he trained to be an actor in Vienna, and for two years remained on the Viennese stage, finally leaving to go into the rapidly-growing film industry as an assistant director. After the Great War he bobbed up as a fully-fledged director and subsequently produced, directed (and even appeared in) his own films in Italy, France and Germany. Arriving in England after an abortive trip to America, by 1936 he was engaged in film production in British studios. The "Motion Picture Almanac" records, however, only one Pascal production in the period before he began making Shaw movies, a minor effort titled *Reasonable Doubt*. There is certainly a reasonable doubt that Pascal at that time, produced other pictures in addition to this modest "quickie," and there are many who affirm that "Gabby" was financially at an extremely low ebb when, in 1938, he began to make *Pygmalion*.

Upwards of half-a-dozen versions have been given of the manner in which Pascal convinced the unpredictable Irishman that only he could film Shaw's plays successfully. My favourite story is that "Gabby" took Shaw to lunch, sold him the idea, and after two hours of solid talking, borrowed a pound from the amused dramatist to pay the bill! But the truth of this incident may be as questionable as the many hundreds of Pascalian stories which have emanated from Denham since the colourful Continental first became news some eight years ago.

Pygmalion and *Major Barbara* prepared the way for a large-scale production of *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, and we are now promised screen versions of *Saint Joan*, *Androcles and the Lion*, *Candida*, and, eventually, the colossal and extremely unfilmable *Man and Superman*. This is, to say the least, an interesting prospect. If Shaw's plays can be transferred successfully to the film medium



Gabriel Pascal directing "Caesar and Cleopatra" at Denham Studios.

—and there are many who say this is close on impossible—then Pascal is probably one of the few men in the film world who can help to accomplish this. He has a really wide knowledge of, and an intense and sincere admiration for all the works of G.B.S., and he, at least, is convinced that the screen is the ideal medium for the Shavian wit and philosophy. Certainly he has Shaw's confidence.

"Gabby" is more temperamental than any of the film stars he has handled. On the set he flies into innumerable rages, his forehead veins stand out dangerously, he gesticulates wildly, while giving vent to a stream of guttural imprecations. Yet he can be extremely charming, and at times is benignly good-humoured, cracking numbers of unfunny jokes at the camera crew and beaming around like a benevolent Buddha at his studio "family." However, these lapses into good humour are comparatively rare, for "Gabby" is not over-burdened with patience, and during a day at the studio countless seemingly trivial incidents transport him into fits of black depression. He will shriek at an actor, curse a technician, glare at his secretary, all at the slightest provocation. But in spite of this almost psychopathic exhibitionism the rotound director has a shrewd brain, an intense love of beauty, an æsthetic appreciation second to none, and a well-developed film sense.

He is meticulous in his direction, though inclined to be pedestrian. Invariably he knows in a moment how a scene should be filmed. He sets his mind on the way he visualises it, and difficulties of setting, technique, lighting are not allowed to obstruct him. Surprisingly to many, he is often right in his judgments, his unorthodoxy sometimes

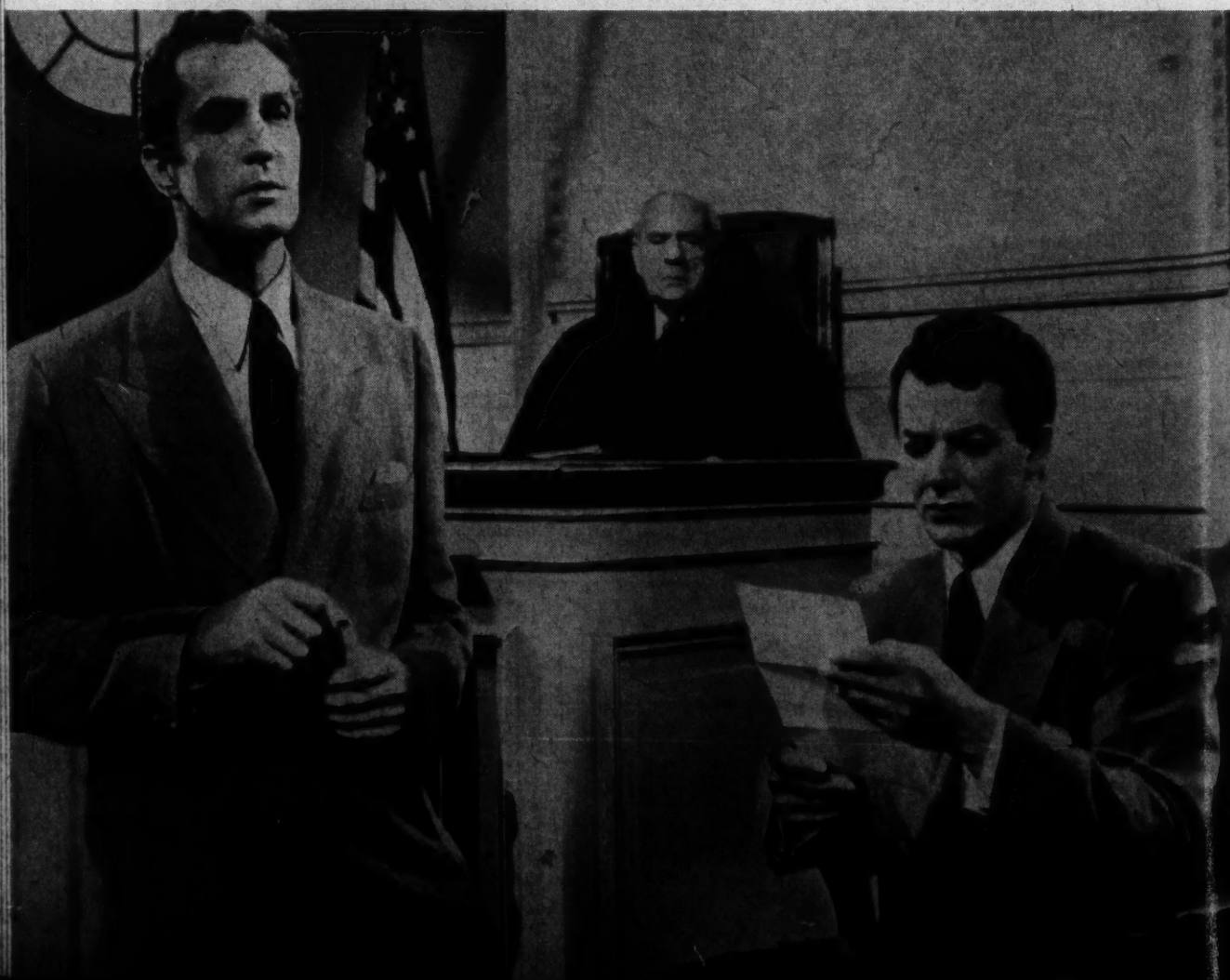
brings good results. He is immensely self-assured and demands complete subservience from everyone in the studios. "Gabby" is above all personal relationships. Regally, a trifle pompously, he stands alone, making important decisions with an air of supreme authority.

Off-stage, while toying with a dish of raw vegetables, Pascal will talk about his ambitions to make great films of Shaw's plays. He is an interesting talker and something of an idealist. Away from the tumult and the shouting he is quiet, calm, and in a curious way pathetic. Although he is ruthlessly self-sufficient one feels that he is not understood by many people, and closer contact with the man will reveal why this is so. His humanity and kindness—and he possesses a good deal of both—are invariably hidden beneath a stolid mask. He seems reluctant to reveal any emotion other than exasperation.

Freudians would no doubt be able to find an explanation in Pascal's life of struggle for his aggressiveness in the studio. "Gabby," however, has no time for Freudians or introspection. In his Buckinghamshire farmhouse he plans his future movies, surrounded by secretaries and script consultants. He has never been known to relax; his energy is inexhaustible. It is this same amazing energy which brought him from obscurity to world fame, and which may help to bring into the cinema some of the great masterpieces of English literature.

PETER NOBLE.

Vincent Price, seen here with Cornel Wilde in "Leave Her to Heaven," directed for 20th Century-Fox by John M. Stahl, gives another outstanding portrayal as the district attorney. He is an actor to watch; since his work in "The Song of Bernadette" he has not been guilty of one bad performance. Particularly memorable was his acting in "Laura" and "The Keys of the Kingdom."



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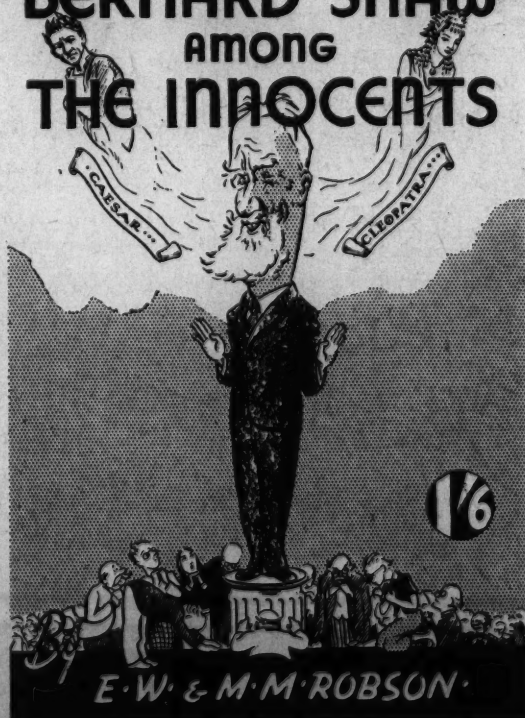
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Recent Documentary Films

Reviewed by JACK LINDSAY

THE development of the Documentary Film has been largely the work of British film-makers, and we can confidently say that we early obtained the lead and have kept it. The documentaries which have been released of recent months are, of course, a mixed bag—so many are made now-a-days—but the best of them uphold our tradition of straightforwardness, sincerity, and poetic realism. One of the greatest of British documentaries in the pre-war years was Basil Wright's *Song of Ceylon*; and now Ralph Keene has directed *Cyprus is an Island*, a different kind of film, but with the same sort of sensitive penetration into the way-of-life of communities very different from any in Britain. A series of finely chosen shots build up the historical background, and then the film deals with the problem of soil-erosion, which threatens the very existence of the Cyprians. It tackles the subject by an adroit dramatisation of the conflict between goat-herd and crop-farmer, and shows how a village overcomes the menace of drought. The skilful commentary, by Laurie Lee, unifies the extremely beautiful photography, and the result is a film perfect of its kind.

To-day and To-morrow, by Robin Carruthers and Ralph Bond, also deals with the Middle East. Its theme is the splendid job of economic organisation done during the war years in the Middle East, when Rommel was thrusting for Cairo. Something had to be done to avert famine, and the consequence was a drive to control and unify the economic system all over the states of the Middle East, which for the first time showed how the lot of the peasants could be stably bettered. The film is business-like, as its theme warrants—unlike *Cyprus is an Island*, with its calm extraction of a subtle essence. But some magnificent shots are obtained, and the material is well organised. The commentary is by Arthur Calder Marshall. This, and the Cyprus film, then, so unlike in many ways, both underline the lesson of the great gains that documentary films can make if they have a fine writer to do the script—a lesson which, on the whole, it must be admitted the documentaries have been ready to learn throughout their years of development.

On the home front the outstanding film is Paul Rotha's *Land of Promise*, on the problem of housing, with script by a team that includes Miles Malleon, Miles Tomalin and Ara Calder Marshall. In this long film Rotha has let himself go at his most dramatically argumentative. At moments the isotypes pall with repetition, and the coda is perhaps prolonged; but nobody except Rotha could have carried the entangled discussion without flagging, without losing the thread. As it is, despite the few longueurs, the film makes a fine forceful whole and musters its often fascinating sequences with a master's certainty. Other films on the housing problem are Ralph Keene's *Proud City* and Frank Salisbury's *The Plan and the People*, both of which deal with the L.C.C. scheme for rebuilding London. The strength in Keen's film lies, perhaps, in its admirable use of models and animation to bring the plan to life, while that of Salisbury's lies in its pleasant working-in of ordinary Londoners and their viewpoint.



Above—Ralph Keene's "Cyprus is An Island," recently seen at the Curzon.

Below—A promising young director is Greenpark's Ken Annakin, who directed recently the lovely "Fenlands," a scene from which is seen here.



Two very good films deal with aspects of provincial life—both by Ken Annakin, of Greenpark. *Fenlands* is a lovely bit of work, dealing with a spot of England where men live in ceaseless fear of floods. *West Riding* catches the flavour of Yorkshire without strain or over-emphasis. Annakin knows how to select the ripely characteristic; and even if these two films lack a complete unity of structure, they have an organic sense of their material. They are honest works, in which, perhaps, the strongest feeling is for landscape, though the harmony of earth and work keeps coming through.

Budge Cooper's *Birthday* is a direct and richly sympathetic film on the subject of childbirth and infant mortality in Scotland. The direction is, however, superior to the script, in which, it appears, the finger of official policy has done some demoralising work. *Soldier Comes Home* is another M.O.I. film, in which the meddling effects of policy seem to have confused and cramped the intention of dealing sincerely with the problems of readjustment for the soldier. But two other M.O.I. films, *Diary for Timothy* and *The Defeated People*, both directed by Humphrey Jennings, show a more unfettered hand at work. The first deals with a baby, Timothy, and the story is told to him in the form of a diary; there are four main characters, a fighter pilot, a farmer, a miner, and an engine-driver. The second deals with the Germans in their year after defeat. Both films have that curiously appealing quality which Jennings always manages to get into his work, and something of the lack of entire concentration—as if Jennings's fertile mind could not allow him to keep to a laid-down pattern. But his experimentation is always exciting and full of creative suggestions. When he comes through again with a theme which can absorb him as did the theme of *The Silent Village*, he should produce something equally subtle and powerful.

Meanwhile, looking back over the last quarter, we can say that our documentaries are keeping up with their job of setting the pace to the commercial feature-film, exploring new possibilities of the medium, and setting a standard of sincerity in the handling of human relationships. Out of their work in the past came the new British feature-film, with its roots in our national life. They still have work to do in preserving values of human and artistic decency.



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Documentary Profile

I. Ralph Keene



THE recent and brilliant documentary, *Cyprus Is An Island*, has drawn attention to director Ralph Keene, and his production unit Greenpark. Keene has been in documentary films for a number of years, and has much excellent work to his credit. The Cyprus film is not greatly superior to many other of his films, but it has served to spotlight Keene due to the excellent Press it received recently on its first London showing at the Curzon. "An enlightening and beautifully photographed film," declared "The Times." "This perfect little film," says Richard Winnington, in "News Chronicle," while Dilys Powell, in "Sunday Times," adds, "This is a beautifully composed picture of rural and pastoral life." The rest of the critics have been equally enthusiasitic, and it seems certain that 1946 will not see a better documentary than Keene's lovely Cyprus film.

Tall, eagle-eyed, dark-haired, Keene came into documentary by the rather roundabout way of Oil Technology, commercial art and picture dealing. Born in India just over forty years ago, he studied for four years at the Royal School of Mines in South Kensington. He completed the course, but then, drawing a bow at a venture, launched out as a commercial artist, a career which was interspaced with jobs as actor and journalist. Then, in 1928, Keene joined a West End art gallery, and was instrumental in bringing modern art to Bond Street. From Paris he brought over the latest works of Matisse, Picasso, Renoir and Derain, and arranged London exhibitions of John and Epstein, as well as Nash, Moore, Mathew Smith, and other comparatively new faces. He found that picture dealing paid big dividends. But came the Wall Street crash, and a slump in art. So Ralph quit Bond Street to take up residence in Wardour Street.

It was reading a copy of Rotha's *The Film Till Now* which decided him to take up film-making, so he declares. After several months of trying to get into the business, Keene met Donald Taylor, and together they formed Strand Films. With no money, but lots of enthusiasm, they began by making small films for the Ministry of Labour, dealing with the Government training schemes for the unemployed. On these Keene worked as an assistant; later his first directorial job was *Roof Tops of London*. Since that time he has both directed and produced dozens of documentaries for Strand, and later for Greenpark.

During those early years at Strand a number of notable documentarians worked here, including Rotha, Legg, Alexander Shaw and

John Taylor ; and the Keene-Taylor organisation proved to be something of a training ground for many who have now made their mark in the documentary field. Keene himself travelled to various parts of the world to make a series of six short films, visiting Egypt, Arabia, India, Malaya, Siam, and China, spending Christmas of 1935 with the Australian Aborigines on Bathurst Island, and the Spring in Bali.

The War found Ralph making a film in Northern Ireland, and later, at the request of the M.O.I., he returned to England to form a new company, Greenpark, which thenceforth founded its reputation on an admirable series of farming films. There were followed by the "Pattern of Britain" series, which are successfully continuing still. Apart from agricultural films, Keene has produced and/or directed such well-known documentaries as *Power on the Land*, *Combined Cadets*, *Make Fruitful the Land*, *It Began on the Clyde*, *The Proud City*, and his most recent success, the film on Cyprus.

Working with Keene at Greenpark is promising young director Ken Annakin, and writer Laurie Lee ; and this youthful company is rapidly coming to the fore among the documentary units working in Britain to-day. Keene is nowadays continually busy trying to keep pace with the ever-increasing demand for short films. There is no longer any shortage of sponsorship, and it is a far cry from the days of the uphill struggle to persuade anyone to have a documentary made at all.

But documentary has come to stay and all the early hopes and struggles have been fully justified. As Ralph Keene says, "I have never regretted the day when Paul Rotha's book decided me to become a documentary film director. It is one of those rare professions in which the job is one's life and one's life the job. And no one need ask more than that."

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FILM BOOKSHELF

Reviews by OSWALD FREDERICK

●

A FILM IS BORN, by Norman Lee (Jordan, 5/-) has, for its subtitle "Choose from 40 Careers in Film Making," and the author, for many years a director and writer in the British film industry, takes us through the whole business of shooting and producing a picture from the moment when the idea is born and becomes a screenplay, to the criticisms written about the finished job in the daily Press. Mr. Lee writes authoritatively upon every phase of the movie game and describes in detail the activities of such varied studio employees as casting manager, wardrobe mistress, process wizard and advisory expert, to mention only a few of the forty interesting (and seemingly lucrative) careers which are open to all.

For anyone who is interested in the many involved stages a big film must pass through, this book will be found well worth reading. For anyone, too, who feels that he would like to work in the glamorous atmosphere of the studio, whether as a star or as a clapper boy, he will learn, from studying these pages, just what he will have to do in the job and to what amazing heights he may reach, no matter how low he starts. But what Mr. Lee fails to tell is how to go about getting these wonderful jobs in the first place, and unless the prospective studio-crasher knows of a certain method of getting past the gate-keeper he will never get the chance to begin any of these forty film careers.

THE BRITISH FILM, by Peter Noble (British Yearbooks, 21/-) is the first book ever published to deal exclusively with the British film industry and the people in it, and the author and publisher are to be congratulated, both on the contents and on the book's high standard of production.

Mr. Noble has dealt with the history of British films from their precarious start towards the end of the last century, through those lean years when British pictures were decidedly nothing to write home about, to the influence of both Sir Alexander Korda and J. Arthur Rank, and the war-time improvements which have often made British films as fine as anything turned out by Hollywood.

In addition, this book carries a comprehensive "Who's Who" of actors, producers, writers and cinematographers, with biographical

details, a reference of all film companies and studios, and a list of representative British films released during the war, with casts and credits. The historical section is, however, inclined to be too sketchy.

But worth the price of the book alone are the eighty full-page illustrations of stills from outstanding films produced during the war, and since British Yearbooks intend to issue this work annually, with the material brought up to date, and new photographs illustrating the best productions of the year, we may confidently look forward to the volumes to come. *The British Film Yearbook* is the finest and most detailed work yet produced on our industry and the people in it.

In their 30-page pamphlet, **BERNARD SHAW AMONG THE INNOCENTS** (Sydneyan Society, 1/6), E. W. and M. M. Robson launch yet another tirade against a British movie they do not like. This time the film is the much-abused *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, and the authors use it as a stick with which to beat Mr. Bernard Shaw. During the past fifty years or so he has also been much abused, but never, I venture to suggest, so vituperatively as in these few pages.

Beginning mildly by describing as a myth the belief that Shaw is a Socialist, the Robsons continue, largely by analysing the text of the play from which the film *Cæsar and Cleopatra* was made, by stating that he is nearer to being a Nazi than the Socialist he calls himself!

Going through the play page by page, they quote each reference to murder, whipping, the cutting-off of heads, torturing, and so on, at the end of it all leaving the playwright looking more like a brutal storm-trooper than the venerable gentleman we have always assumed him to be. "Did Shaw actually write this," asks the authors, "or was it Joseph Kramer, the beast of Belsen? Could Kramer have poisoned and shot and gassed his victims, unless he had first enjoyed the thought of doing so?" There is much more in a similar vein.

One may not agree with all that is written about Shaw in this pamphlet but the arguments are propounded most convincingly. As the opening sentence has it, "a bash is as good as a boost," and if this attack against Shaw does nothing else it will probably make you want to see the film in order to know what all the fuss is about.

FILM AND THE FUTURE, by Andrew Buchanan (Allen & Unwin, 6/-), is a survey of the present state of the industry and, as the title implies, an attempt to prophesy its future from the technical point of view. Mr. Buchanan points out the supreme duty of all producers—to penetrate into the nations of the world in the future, and to design their efforts to exert a universal appeal. The educational film, he feels, will probably make the greatest advance, and he pins his hopes on the makers of documentaries to bring about a closer understanding between nations.

He ends by quoting that much-used but nevertheless still true remark of Thomas Edison's—"Whoever controls the motion picture industry controls the most powerful medium of influence over the public."

About the Contributors



Louis Golding : Well-known novelist, whose most famous books include *Magnolia Street*, *The Miracle Boy*, and *Mr. Emmanuel* (which was made into a film by Two Cities in 1944). As a screenwriter he has worked on the following films : *The Proud Valley*, *Freedom Radio*, *Mr. Emmanuel*, and *The Silver Cat*. His newest novel is *The Glory of Elsie Silver* ; his newest film is *I Fought at Arnhem*.

Jack Lindsay : Author, essayist, playwright and poet, is now working in documentary films. His recent books include *British Achievement in Art and Music*, and *The Barriers are Down*. His play *Robin Hood* was produced last year at Unity Theatre, while *Face of Coal*, a theatre documentary which he wrote with B. L. Coombes, was produced by "Theatre '46" at the Scala in March.

Peter Northcote : Is film and stage critic of "The Queen," and has also contributed articles to journals as diverse as "The Freethinker" and "What's On in London."

Gordon Wellesley : Screenwriter and film director. Has written screenplays in Hollywood, and more recently in this country, where he has collaborated on such films as *Java Head*, *Lorna Doone*, *Freedom Radio*, *Atlantic Ferry*, *The Shipbuilders*, and *Mr. Emmanuel*. In 1943 he co-directed *The Silver Fleet* for Archers. His original story for *Night Train to Munich* obtained an "Oscar" award in 1940. Wellesley is considered one of the leading screenwriters in British studios.

F. Maurice Speed : Author, film critic, and editor of "What's On in London." His books include *Film Review*, *Movie Cavalcade*, and the forthcoming *London Scrapbook*. He broadcasts regularly on the B.B.C. on new films and plays.

Roy-Alexander Fowler : Is the London correspondent of the French journal, *La Cinématographie Française*. Still under twenty, he has written a book on Orson Welles (published by Pendulum in May) ; and has recently finished two further books, *The Cinema during the War Years* and *French Cinema*.

Robert Lantz : Story editor for Columbia Pictures in this country. At the age of twenty he was awarded the Austrian Reich Prize for Literature, and subsequently had four plays produced in Vienna in the period 1934-37. Since then he has been engaged in screenwriting in Switzerland, France and Germany. His column "Show Business" appears weekly in the magazine "Leader"

Oswald Frederick : Has been engaged in commercial art since 1936, and has illustrated a number of books, designed book jackets, etc. In the army during the whole of the war, and used this time to write a novel and three books on the history and technique of boxing (one of which, *White Hope*, is being published shortly). He has contributed to "Socialist Review," "Band Wagon," "Everybody's," etc., and is an authority on modern American literature.

Frank Shelley : Actor and journalist. Has been on the stage since 1936. His book-length thesis on "Stage and Screen Acting" obtained The Blackwell Prize for 1941 at Aberdeen University, and he is preparing this work for publication shortly. He is now producing at Oxford Playhouse.

Edwin Alston : Is a young critic and poet, at present working as a hospital porter in London. Has had his work published in most of the modern reviews, and is at present working on a new translation of the collected poems of Gerard de Nerval.

Peter Cotes : Actor and stage producer. Has been in films since 1932. Recent appearances in *Beware of Pity* and *I See a Dark Stranger*. Is a great admirer of the work of Chaplin, and has a book on the subject coming out in June. With Frederick Piffard he is co-director of a new theatre group at the Lindsey, Notting Hill Gate.

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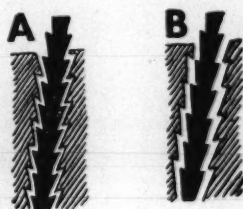
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